

THE JACQUERIE ;

OR,

THE LADY AND THE PAGE

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THE JACQUERIE.

CHAPTER I.

Even in the middle of the fourteenth century, the tint of age had overspread the vast old church of St. Peter of Montvoie, some twenty miles from Tours. The stone, which had once been light grey, was stained with many a dingy colour, and the sharp biting of the mason's chisel had been rounded away by the obliterating hand of Time. Indeed, so tall and shadowy was the building, that although in its first newness the exterior might have appeared bright and shining, amidst the green woods that covered the surrounding country, the interior never could have given the spectator the idea of freshness, but in its dim obscurity must have looked old even from the first. It had been built in that style erroneously called Norman, but at a period when the round arch was gradually declining, and the long lancet-shaped window, the lofty column, and the horse-shoe arch, were occasionally used. The lighter forms, indeed, of a later period were not there to be seen; and all was heavy, massive, and stern, scarcely relieved by the many mouldings and rich ornaments of the arches, and the quaint and ever-varying decorations of the capitals. The tall windows afforded but a faint and uncertain light, except when the full sunshine of the summer poured at noon through the arch of the southern transept, and even then the stained glass softened and saddened the blaze, giving a sort of un-
• ly lustre to the rays as they fell upon the chequered pavement. Round the chancel ran two dark side aisles, which shed none but wandering beams, and found their way to her from the body of the church—except, indeed, when of the small, low-arched doors that led into the cloisters the neighbouring abbey opened, and the daylight for a few moments streamed in, displaying the figure of a priest or monk, and casting his long shadow upon the floor.
• this church, one evening in the autumn of the year 1357,

Just when the light was growing faint, ere the going down of the sun left all in darkness, was a tall, handsome young man of four or five-and-twenty years of age, with his arms crossed upon his bosom and his eye bent down upon the ground. The dark aisle in the transept in which he stood was too shadowy for any one to have distinguished his features or their expression, had there been other people in the church, but he was quite alone. Neither priest appeared at the altar nor penit in the confessional; and the flickering of a faint lamp before one of the shrines was the only thing that looked like life within the walls of the building.

Though no one saw his features, it may be necessary that the reader should see them with the eye of imagination, an also requisite that he should mark the peculiar expression which those features wore. The lines were all good, except perhaps about the mouth, where a certain heavy fulness of the lips took away all beauty from that part of the face. The forehead was broad and capacious, though not remarkably high; the brow strongly marked, but finely shaped; the eyes large, sparkling, and full of thoughtful meaning; the nose small, but beautifully cut, and the chin perhaps a little more prominent than is exactly symmetrical, but still rounded into that form which the Grecian chisel was delighted to display. The hair and beard, which were both short, were of a rich brown colour, and curled about the face in many a graceful sweep; but the form of the head was in itself remarkable, being nearly spherical, though there certainly did appear a degree of fulness behind the ears and at the back of the skull which diminished the beauty of the whole.

Could anybody have watched the expression which the countenance we have described wore at that moment, he might have been more puzzled than ever he was in life before to interpret the meaning of what was written on that page. Dark and stern it certainly was; but at the same time there was mingling of scorn and melancholy, too, with that look of fierce determination, which had a strange effect. The brow was knitted into a heavy frown; the full black eye was fixed upon the pavement, though nothing was to be seen there but dim shadow of the aisle; the nostril was curled as if strong contempt for some object in his own thoughts, but the turn of the mouth was that of deep sadness; and he stood for several minutes, till suddenly the whole changed, and, though as mingled as before, the expressed elements entirely different. A low suppressed laugh caused his lips to part; a gleam of triumphant joy lighted

his eye, as if from the anticipation of some success difficult of attainment; the knitting of the brow passed away, and the only part of his former look that remained was the scornful turn of the nostril and the upper lip.

It may seem strange to the reader that I have paused to give so minute a description of the features of a man who was dressed in the garb of a villein or serf, attached as domestic to some noble house; but so it was, and such in fact was the condition of the personage now before us. The dress that he wore was of brown *bure*, as it was then called, but it fitted him well; and with a certain degree of vanity as well as taste, he had contrived to give it so much additional smartness that it became his person as well as more lordly robes. Each sinewy limb was shown to the best advantage, and the symmetrical grace of his whole person was displayed rather than concealed by the close-fitting garments which covered him.

In saying that his station was that of a domestic in some noble house, I do not mean to imply that it was inferior as compared with that held by others in his own grade of society. It must be remembered, that many of those tasks of personal attendance and service which are now performed by hired servants were in those days executed by young nobles of the highest rank and fairest prospects, either in the dwellings of their own parents or in the castles of the friends and relations of their family, where they appeared as pages or squires; and to wait upon their lord's person, to clean his armour as well as the dressing of his horse, the service of his table, and various other acts now considered menial, were then part of their daily duty. Many other functions, however, were assigned in every large mansion to serfs or villeins, who sometimes, in the house of a liberal and kindly master, were raised to offices apparently higher than those which were conferred on the young nobility of the household. There was a distinction, however, which perhaps we do not very clearly understand at present; and although a villein might fill the post of chaplain, almoner, and counsellor, and sit at his lord's table,* while the sons of princes poured the wine or carved the meat, yet the serf could not, except in default of noble hands, bear his lord's shield or spear, could not give him the water to wash before dinner, or hand him the cup out of which he drank.

The dress of the person whom I have described was good,

* This fact is proved by various particulars given by the *Sire de Joinville* respecting the household of St. Louis.

in the texture, and such as none but one highly favoured would have been permitted to wear, though it was still that of the villain, and showed that, although the form and the features might all be as high and refined as Grecian sculpture ever displayed, yet the taint of slavery was in the blood, and that the wearer was a serf of the soil.

By this time, however, great changes and ameliorations had taken place in the condition of that class, and they stood in a very different position from that in which they had been placed at the time that Europe first issued forth from the darkness of the ninth century. Many wise and good monarchs had willingly and anxiously contributed to add comforts to the situation of the lower orders, and if not actually to unbind the fetters from their hands, at least so to regulate the relations between the lords of the soil and them, that those fetters might not be made more galling. Many unwise and vicious monarchs, too—for God often uses the wicked as instruments of good—in their quarrels with the baronage, which sometimes trod rather hard upon the skirts of the royal mantle, had endeavoured to punish the obnoxious class by giving back some of the privileges of man to those on whom that class trampled; and thus, though the villeins upon the lord's estates or territory were still nominally his chattels, as much as his horse, his dog, or his hawk, yet in his dealing with them he was restrained within certain limits and by certain rules: their property was protected, their lives and persons were under the safeguard of the law, and they were no longer a mere herd of cattle, to be dealt with at the pleasure of a brutal owner.

The cultivators of the soil, the mechanic, the manufacturer, the merchant, the inhabitants of all villages, and many of the dwellers in towns, were generally classed as villeins. Though, long before the period of which I now speak, the formation of communes had introduced a distinction, and the free commons of a great number of cities presented an intermediate class between the baronage and the serfs, they were still ranked as villeins by blood, though enjoying all the rights of freemen without the privileges of nobility. In rural districts, however, many a terrible and degrading badge of slavery still remained fixed upon the peasant. In one place, the *right of the lord* implied one degrading service, in another it comprised others; and in times of trouble and disaster, when the strong hand of lawful authority was removed and the arm of the law shortened, exaction, pillage, oppression, and tyranny resumed their full sway; the dearest rights and most sacred feelings of human nature were set at nought; and the only safeguard

of the peasant was the honour, virtue, and benevolence of some of the chivalrous lords of the land. That safeguard was sufficient to protect many, but it was not sufficient to secure all; and although, in some instances, the noble châtelain was a father to those below him, ever ready to succour them in sorrow or calamity, to shield them from danger, and to avenge them against wrong, yet in others the feudal lord was the enemy of all around, the tyrant of all beneath.

The times I write of, too, were amongst the most terrible that ever the fair land of France beheld. Her king was a captive in a foreign land; her nobility, overthrown in the terrible day of Poitiers, were scattered, disunited and disarrayed; her fields overrun with bands of lawless adventurers, living alone by plunder, and inured to massacre and bloodshed as a trade; her finances ruined; her young prince powerless, insulted, and betrayed, struggling with a fierce faction and ambitious demagogues in the capital; and not one bond of union existing throughout the whole land but that of similar language, manners, and faith. The latter, alas! was suffered to have but little sway either in moderating men's passions or directing their actions. In the turbulence, the excitement, the disorganisation of the day, the functions of religion were reduced to the task of affording consolation and nourishing hope; but even this was a blessed privilege where all else was sorrow, wretchedness, and despair.

It may easily be conceived, then, that while such a state of anarchy existed in the land, the condition of the peasantry in many districts daily became worse. Though the law existed, there was none to administer the law, or to enforce it between the lord and his serf; and thus the will of every man became the only rule in his own territories. *Jacques Bonhomme*, as the insolent nobles called the unfortunate cultivator of the soil, sowed in fear and reaped with pain; and in many places ill more burthensome than human nature could bear ground the labourer to the earth.

Such was the state of France at the time when the person, of whom I have described stood alone in the dark aisle of the Church of St. Peter at Montvoje, musing bitterly over many a topic of deep and terrible interest. By his dress one might perceive that he was of the class of serfs, and that he was some favoured domestic in a noble house. From the scenes that are to come we shall gather the character of his mind, and see more of his condition and feelings, as well as learn those actions which gained him a place, though a sad one, in the history of the times in which he lived.

CHAPTER II.

SUDDENLY the door at the end of the aisle opened, and a ray from the setting sun broke in upon the darkness, tinting the manifold columns and arches as it passed, and casting a sudden brilliance down the long perspective of the pavement, like one of those bright and wonderful thoughts which sometimes, in the mental world, burst upon subjects that have remained obscure for ages, discovering to the eye of a Newton or a Herschel a long chain of beautiful facts, all lighted up by the removal of one dark obstacle.

The opening of the door disclosed to the eyes of him who was standing in the church two forms entering from the cloistered quadrangle of the abbey adjoining, and he instantly drew back into one of the small chapels, and bent his knee before a shrine, though, to say sooth, he prayed not in his heart, but gazed between the pillars that concealed his own person at the others, as they paused for a moment in the archway, with the light shining round them as if in a picture.

The two figures were those of an old man and a young one: the first was dressed in the long robe of a grey friar; but the loose heavy gown, even when massed in the dark shadow, as he stood with the light flowing in from behind, could not conceal the calm dignity of his person; while the ray, catching upon the bald head and streaming through the white hair, showed enough to account for a certain bend of the whole form by the heavy pressure of the stern hand of Time. The younger man who stood beside him was tall and upright, with an air of easy grace and commanding power in every line, and as he advanced with a step firm but noiseless, and slow to suit the pace of his more aged companion, he offered a picture of vigorous manhood in its early prime, such as might well employ the hand of a skilful artist to depict.

As the latter turned to speak to the good prior of Montvoye, for such was the monk who walked by his side, the light caught upon his face, and displayed a countenance decidedly handsome in feature, but deriving its great beauty from the

expression, which was very peculiar. It was calm, thoughtful, and even gentle, with a flickering smile hanging at the moment round the lip, which seemed to denote a quick and playful fancy; but the tranquillity of the expression had nothing of weakness in it: as did his whole figure and carriage, it gave the idea of high mental and bodily powers, great energy and activity of character, though those qualities were for the time in repose.

The complexion was fair rather than dark, but the face was browned with much exposure to the sun and wind; and a distinct line across the forehead showed where the casque or the cap had shaded the head from the summer heat. The eyes were hazel and fringed with long dark lashes, but the hair and beard were of a light rich brown.

He was speaking as he came forward; but the only words which caught the ear of the person who remained kneeling in the neighbouring chapel were—

"I am right glad it is so, father, for I have myself known what it is to lose those who are most dear. Not only is your noble brother living, but in good health. His wounds are now healed; but he is one of those who could not survive a field like that, without some worthy marks of having done his duty."

"You do him justice, noble lord," replied the prior: "Maurice de Mauvinet* will never shame his race. We have mourned for him as dead, and well may we now rejoice to find him living."

The prior said no more for the moment, but walked on by the side of his more youthful companion, musing as he went. Both paused, bowed, and crossed themselves as they traversed the nave before the high altar; and then, taking their way to the opposite door of the transept, they issued forth upon the steps of the church; before which stood a glittering train of men-at-arms, calmly talking with some monks and serving-men, arranging the caparisons of their horses and soothing the eager fire with which the chargers fretted to depart.

The young nobleman turned as if to take his leave, but the prior spoke first, with a thoughtful smile. "I will not detain you long, noble sir," he said, "for the evening is at hand, and night is no time to travel in this poor land of France; but yet I would fain hear another word or two of my dear brother's

* Maurice de Mauvinet was Seneschal of Touraine, and was taken prisoner, severely wounded, at the battle of Poitiers. He is one of those particularly mentioned in the letter of the Black Prince.

fate ere we part, though to-morrow, perhaps, I shall meet with you again."

"Nay, speak boldly, my good father," replied the knight. "I fear not the darkness. What would you know more?"

"First," said the prior, "I would ask, when we may hope to see my brother back?"

"Nay, that I know not," answered his companion: "right soon, I trust, good father. He may come whensoever he will. 'Tis now some six weeks since that, journeying by Poitiers, I first had reason to believe the letters he had written, as soon as his wounds were healed, had never reached his friends in France. It is no marvel such is the case; for where no law remains, and it would seem that all rule has been done away with here, letters often find other hands than those for which they were intended. However, I wrote to the noble lord at once, and sent the packet by a trusty messenger, who I know has since reached the good city of London, telling him what I had heard, and beseeching him to come over hither and seek his liberty himself, lest men should say I had acted so discourteously as not to put a worthy prisoner to ransom. It never crossed my mind, however, that his near friends and children themselves were all this time ignorant that he was in life, till last night, at Tours, I heard by a mere gossip's talk in the inn that he was mourned as dead, and his young son called Count of Mauvinet in his place."

"The boy will gladly give his countship up," replied the prior, "to see his small image in his dear father's eyes again. But one question more, most noble capital. At what sum have you fixed my brother's ransom? We will raise it speedily and with right good will."

"Faith, my father," answered the other, "it was not I who fixed it; 'twas himself. The simple facts are these:—After the battle, when night was just approaching, I went out to seek for the body of my sister's son, who had fallen. We found it amongst a heap of dead, and lying near was what seemed the corpse of my good Lord of Mauvinet. They had stripped him of his arms and clothing; but I knew his face, for we had held a conference the day before on some matters regarding a truce; and, thinking it but an act of charity towards his friends, I bade my people raise his body too, and bear it to my tent. Ere we reached the camp, however, I found that the spark of life was not yet extinct, and therefore we gave him such tending as the time admitted. He recovered, as you know; and I scarcely held it just to put a man so captured to ransom. He, however, fixed the

sum himself at five thousand marks of silver, and reckoned on having it right speedily. However, believe me, my good father, it was not seeking his ransom that I came; it was merely that, hearing you all believed him dead, I thought it but a pleasant ride to turn some twenty miles from my way, and by the tidings of his safety to light up joy in hearts that had long been desolate."

"Joy, indeed, do you bear with you, noble captain," replied the prior, "and glad will be the welcome that awaits you at my brother's house, when once the news that you bring is known; but yet, as at this hour and at these times I fear you would not easily get admission within the gates of the castle, whose châtelain is a boy of six years old, and whose lady does not yet number nineteen, unless you were accompanied by some known friend—I have therefore —"

"I should but have to ride a few miles farther," replied the knight, interrupting him with a gay laugh. "The truce holds me from storming the castle; and if they will not have the good news I bear them to-night, they must wait till you carry it to them to-morrow morning."

"Not so, noble sir," replied the prior; "for although, as I told you, the abbot being absent at this moment, I cannot to-night have the satisfaction of accompanying you to Mauvinet myself, yet I have provided means for ensuring your reception. I have just sent for a youth now at the abbey. He is well known in my brother's house and greatly trusted by us all, and will both serve to guide you thither and open the gates to you when you arrive. He has not yet come up, I see; but I suppose he was taken by surprise, and has some small preparations to make for his journey."

The knight thanked the good monk for his care in simple terms, and then remained plunged in silence; for he had many another thought to busy his mind withal, and the things that were now passing around him formed as yet but a light episode in his existence. The prior himself resumed the discourse, however, saying, after a short pause, "In behalf of the youth who is coming I would bespeak your kind consideration, my lord; for though I must not say that he is of noble blood, yet he is in all things far above the race of mere peasants."

"The son of some citizen?" asked the knight, with an air of indifference.

"Not exactly," replied the prior. "His father held lands in Normandy, but fell under some false suspicions during the troubles in that district, and was unjustly put to death by

CHAPTER III.

THERE was a castle upon a slight rising ground in the midst of a wide basin in the hills. It was strongly fortified according to the military architecture of the fourteenth century: barbican, portcullis, moat, and drawbridge defended it sufficiently on all sides against the ordinary means of attack; and the tall walls and towers, with their *crenelles* and loopholes, threatening an approaching enemy with sad annoyance in his advance. Sweeping down the lower slopes of the neighbouring uplands, indeed, were various scattered woods, leaving wide open fields between them; but they came at no point so near the castle as to give a coming foe the means of concealing his proceedings.

The moat, or piece of water which surrounded the fortress itself, was somewhat more than fifty yards broad, and was indeed one of its best defences; for only one means of traversing its deep water existed, which was by a narrow causeway, not carried straight across, but with a bend or elbow in the middle, so that any inimical troops which might attempt to force their way over, before they reached the drawbridge and barbican must necessarily expose their flank, first on the one side and then on the other, to the whole artillery of the castle walls.

Those walls themselves, at the point opposite to the causeway, approached close to the edge of the water, and in some places the grey foundations dipped themselves therein; but on the three other sides a crescent-shaped slip of meadow stretched out between the château itself and the greater moat, together with a small piece of ground cultivated as a garden, and one or two old trees. The breadth of this field was nowhere more than thirty or forty yards, and between it and the walls ~~was a~~ a ~~second~~ moat, cut from the other, and crossed by two or three drawbridges which led to posterns in the towers, sufficiently wide and high to permit the passage of a horse; for in truth the green meadow that we have mentioned was used, in times when it might be dangerous to cross

to the other side of the great moat, for the purpose of practising those chivalrous sports which were a part of the daily life of that period.

It was about half-past eight o'clock when the party which we have seen quit the Abbey of Montvoysé paused for a moment on the slope of one of the neighbouring hills; and the young guide, who had not quitted the side of his noble companion during the ride, pointed with his hand towards the valley below, saying, "There, noble sir, is the castle."

The moon had risen little more than an hour above a line of dark wood that skirted the distant horizon behind the castle; and her living beams showed the whole dark masses of the ancient feudal building cutting clear upon the luminous sky behind, while the wide moat, except where the shadow of the towers fell, shone bright and silverlike in the white moonlight. A long row of windows in the lower part of the keep appeared illuminated by lights within, and from the casement of a chamber in the story just above streamed forth the rays of a lamp.

"You see, noble sir," continued the youth, after they had paused for a moment—"you see they are still waking. That is the chamber of the Lady Adela, above the knights' hall."

"You have guided us well and quickly, good youth," answered his companion: "let us spur on, however, lest we have yet to awake the lady from her slumbers."

The young man followed rapidly, but still a step behind the knight; for though he had been treated with kindly courtesy, there had not been wanting that tone of conscious superiority in the capital's demeanour which he was well entitled to assume both by station and renown in arms. The youth felt it somewhat painfully, however—even more, perhaps, than he would have done from those whom he knew well, and who had not the habit of treating him as the mere peasant, whom the churl's blood excluded from all courteous consideration. I have said, indeed, that he had not been so used by the knight, who had addressed him often and asked him many a question, showing more interest in him than most men might have done, so circumstanced. But still, the moment the answer was given, the capital had relapsed into a state of apparent indifference, remained silent for several minutes, and then spoken of something totally different.

Why he should expect more attention from strangers than from those with whom he was familiar the youth could hardly tell; but yet the cold want of interest with which the knight heard his replies seemed to show him more sensibly the dark

spot of the earl's blood; it was as if each man he met marked it upon his forehead and treated him accordingly. His nature was a generous nature, however: he might grieve without anger; he could feel pain without bitterness; and although he longed to conquer his fate, it was by great and noble deeds which would shame the world for fixing on any class of men the odious name of villeins.

When they had reached the bottom of the descent, the knight again drew in his horse and paused to look up at the dark towers as they rose majestically against the sky. The light was still shining from the window above, and a faint strain of music found its way out into the air of night.

"She sings!" said the captal, speaking to himself. "She sings! So soon do deep griefs pass from the mind of youth!"

To his surprise, the young man who rode by his side, and who had never ventured to address him except when he himself was spoken to, now replied, somewhat sharply, "It is a hymn! Hark!"

The captal made no observation, but paused and listened, and now distinctly heard that the strain which he had taken for a light song was in fact a solemn address to heaven. He did not answer the youth's observation, however, but only crossed himself, saying, "God hear her orisons! Now we must seek admission quickly. Over this causeway seems our nearest way."

"It is the only way," replied the young man; "but take care how you try it till I have blown my horn, for you might have a flight of arrows on you, such as fell at Poitiers."

"Now heaven forbid!" replied the captal; "wind your horn, good youth."

The young man raised his horn to his lips and blew a long and cheerful blast. A moment after, a warder on the barbican answered in the same tone, and shouted out a welcome in reply to the well-known sounds, but at the same time demanded aloud, "Whom have you got with you?"

"I know not your name, noble sir," said the guide to his companion. "All I know is, that you are a friend of my good lord the prior."

"Say it is the Captal de Buch," answered the knight, "who comes with good tidings to the house of Mauvinet."

"What! the noble Captal de Buch," exclaimed the youth, gazing up in his companion's face, "who led the English horse against the battle of the constables at Poitiers?"

"The same," replied the captal; "the same, young man; but be sure you say he brings good tidings, for my name is

not too well loved in France, and may not gain me admission without something added."

"Your name is honoured throughout the world," replied the young man, "but I will do your bidding if you will wait for but a moment here;" and riding on alone he approached the barbican, and after a few words was admitted by the warder.

The Capital de Buch remained in a musing mood, sometimes gazing down into the glistening waters of the moat, sometimes looking up to the moonlight sky, sometimes scanning the dark towers, and, while his spirit was in truth busy with other things, taking in vague impressions of their military strength; for, in despite of all that has been said against it, the mind is not only capable to a certain degree of carrying on two operations at once, but generally does so; and we continually find that, while we are revolving one definite train of ideas with all the intensity of deep reflection, the casual sights that pass before the eye, and the sounds that fall upon the ear, are each marked and considered in a general manner, as if by separate powers of perception and thought within us. The armed attendants of the knight in the mean while remained at some short distance behind, the younger and more impetuous fretting at the brief pause, and the old and veteran followers of the great leader calmly enduring a delay which they were well aware proceeded but from necessary caution, gazing up with curious eyes at the battlements, and thinking how such a castle might be best attacked.

There was another person present, however, who had joined the party at some distance from the abbey, and who, after speaking a word to their young guide, had fallen behind. This was the remarkable man whom we have described in the first chapter, and who, after overtaking the troop, had shown no disposition to converse or jest with the light-hearted men-at-arms of the capital's train, during the whole journey they had made together. His eyes were now neither turned to the sky, nor to the moat, nor to the castle, but were either fixed upon the ground or busily engaged in scanning the forms of his temporary companions. The same scornful bend was still about his lip, and it might curl somewhat more strongly at some of the words which he caught, but he uttered not a syllable in reply.

At the end of about ten minutes the delay seemed to be long even to the capital, and from time to time he turned his eyes towards the barbican, while his horse pawed the ground impatiently, as if wondering what delayed his impetuous rider.

At length, however, the light of torches appeared in the gate; the drawbridge was once more let down, the portcullis was raised, and by the flickering glare of the flambeaux might be seen a number of armed men arraying themselves on either side of the causeway, while the youth who had guided the party thither came forth and announced to the captal that he was welcome to the Castle of Mauvinet.

Ere he entered, however, one of the old soldiers of that knight officer's band rode up to his lord's side, and begged him to remark the armed throng which lined the portal of the barbican. The captal, however, merely replied with an impatient "Pshaw!" and touching his horse slightly with the spur, rode on across the causeway, passed the outer defences, and bowing with a courteous inclination to the soldiery as he proceeded, entered the gates of the castle upon horseback and dismounted in the court-yard. Here he found stationed several old officers to receive him; but the youth who had guided him thither still acted the part of his chief conductor, and led him forward up the steps to the great hall of the building, which was known by the name of "The Knights' Hall."

Although the room contained many lights, yet the part where they first entered was comparatively dark; but at the farther end was an object which instantly attracted the captal's attention, and seemed to surprise him not a little. It was the form of a girl, apparently of nineteen or twenty years of age, habited in garments of deep black, and followed by a waiting-woman in the same sombre garb. The captal could not doubt for a moment that the lady before him was the person whom he came to see; and the surprise which he evidently felt must have been excited either by the beauty and grace of her form, and the loveliness of her face, or by the expression of wondering hope and joy which lighted up her countenance.

He advanced quickly towards her, however, while she on her part came forward with a hasty step, exclaiming, "Welcome, welcome, my good Lord Captal? Albert tells me you bring me glad tidings. I know it; I know it! My father is alive! A thousand welcomes for such happy news!" And in the eagerness of her joy, according to the simple custom of that day, without shame or reserve the lady approached the knight and kissed him on either side of the face, while her eyes beamed forth the delight that was in her heart. At the same time, however, as if doubting her own hopes, she repeated twice, "Is it not true? is it not true, noble knight?"

"Yes, lady," replied the captal, it is true. Your noble

father does live, is well, and will soon be restored unto you. I have brought you the tidings myself, that I might have the satisfaction of witnessing the joy which I now behold."

"Joy indeed!" replied the lady; "joy indeed! the greatest that has entered these gates for many a day; but I must send for my poor brother. Though the dear child sleeps, it is no sin to awake him with such news as this."

I will not pause to detail the further conversation of the knight and the young Lady of Mauvinet. It lasted nearly an hour, and in the course of it all that the capital had to tell brought forth on her fair face a thousand varying and beautiful expressions, which caught the eye of one not insensible to beauty, and made him long to know more of the bright heart from which such gleams seemed to issue forth.

With graceful courtesy and kindness, though with some timidity of manner, the lady caused refreshments to be set before her guest and pressed him to his food, while several of the old officers of her father's household stood round the table, and others went to prepare lodgings in the castle for the knight and his followers.

Adela de Mauvinet was soon joined in her task of entertaining her unexpected guest by her young brother, a boy of six or seven years old, whose gladness to hear of his father's safety seemed even beyond his years, and increased the recompense which Adela's joy had already bestowed upon the capital for the glad tidings which he had brought.

It was not till after he had told the story twice, and added many a little anecdote to gratify the children of his prisoner, that the great leader retired to rest; but if we must say truth, the thought of Adela de Mauvinet, of her beauty, and of the varying changes which had come over her countenance while he told her of her father's safety, somewhat disturbed his repose, and made his slumbers more dreamy and disturbed than they were wont to be.

Let it not be supposed for one moment that the capital was already in love. Though those were days in which such a thing was quite possible—when the Romeo and Juliet love, brought forth, like the lightning from its cloud, in a single moment, often produced effects as fierce and keen as that of heaven's bolt itself, rending the stubborn heart and spreading desolation around—yet the capital was of a different nature, and loved not easily, though long. Still the beauty and the grace of her whom he had that night seen for the first time touched his imagination, though not his heart; and he lay and thought for more than one half-hour of Adela de Mauvinet, and dreamed of her in sleep.

CHAPTER IV.

THERE had been a light frost upon the ground, but the morning was bright and clear, and some of the soldiery of the castle had been wrestling and playing at backsword and buckler in that open space between the walls of the castle and the great moat which we have already mentioned. It was a fine sight to see them in the clear fresh air, with their strong and muscular limbs cast every moment into some new and graceful attitude; and several of the followers of the Capitai de Buch, who came at first merely to look on, soon entered so fully into the spirit of the contest, that, when invited by some of the wrestlers to take part, they joined in and tried a fall with the rest.

There were two persons, however, who gazed for some time on the sports, but took no part therein, remaining aloof at some distance, and with crossed arms and bended heads watching the exercises in which they were unwiking or unable to mingle. These persons were no other than the youth who had conducted the Capitai de Buch to Mauvinet, and the man whom we have described as lingering in the Church of Montvoye. Very different, however, was the expression on the countenance of each as they stood there and gazed. The face of the younger displayed a keen interest in all that he saw going on before him, while that of his companion was unmoved and calm, and seemed rather to hold the wrestlers and their sports in contempt than to derive any pleasure from the sight of their pastime.

"Come, Albert," he said at length, addressing the other; "come, let us get away from these bawling fools. To stand here and watch them does no good either to you or me. You would fain join them and be such another as one of themselves: I despise them, and would not be one of them if I could. Come, Albert; come and let us talk over poor France."

"I might join them this moment if I would," replied the other; "you know they are all very kind to me."

"Kind!" replied his companion with a bitter sneer upon his lip, and at the same time walking slowly away; "kind! and you are content to take from kindness that which is your own by right!"

The young man to whom he spoke started, and looked inquiringly in his companion's face. "Mine by right!" he exclaimed; "how is it mine by right more than yours? What is it that you mean, William Caillet? How is it mine more than yours?"

"I said not that it was yours more than mine," replied Caillet; "but come away to where we cannot be heard, and I will explain to you my meaning."

As he spoke he moved away with a slow step and a careless air, as if unwilling to let any of those around see that there was in his bosom deeper thoughts than were displayed by the mere surface. The other followed him across one of the small bridges, and by a postern into the castle. Caillet paused not within the building, but crossed the court, and sauntering through the great gates approached the barbican. He walked on with an air of listless indifference, spoke a few words to the warder who let down the drawbridge for them, and then, seeing that his companion lingered as if unwilling to go, he said, "Come, Albert, will you not, take a walk this fine morning? See how bright the sun shines: you will find matter for some new song."

The youth whom he called Albert smiled and followed him, merely replying, "I cannot go far, Caillet, for I have charge to wait upon the noble Captal de Buch till the good prior comes."

"The captal will not want you for an hour or two," replied Caillet, "and you have plenty of time for a walk. Come if you be willing; if not, stop behind. Good faith, it is the same to me. I seldom seek better company than my own; for now-a-days one's thoughts are one's best friends."

The other made no answer, but accompanied him in silence, and Caillet took his way through the meadows on the opposite side of the moat, and walked on up the slope of the hill to some trees a little in advance of the wood, which crowned a spot where a precipitous bank of no great height afforded a full view into the valley, with the castle and all the adjoining lands. There the two sat themselves down; and for several minutes Caillet spoke not a word, but continued gazing with a meditative look over the fair scene spread out before him.

His companion's eyes also rested long upon the landscape, with much real enjoyment, of all that is fine in nature; and, to

say truth, attaching no great importance to the words of Caillet, he had totally forgotten all that had previously passed between them, when the other again resumed the subject, saying, "I asked you if you were content to take as a favour what is yours by right; and you seemed as much surprised at my saying that it is yours by right, as if you were as ignorant a peasant as any of all the many who hug their chains, scarcely knowing that they bear them."

"Still I do not understand what you mean, Caillet," replied the other. "I have no right to meddle with the sports of a rank above myself unless I am invited."

"They have thrown away much teaching upon you to very little purpose," replied Caillet in a tone of scornful wonder. "Is it possible that you, Albert, who have had all the learning the monks of the convent can give, and have been taught everything that even a knightly education can bestow, should be so blind, so dull, so stupid, as not to know, or so base as not to feel, that yours are the same rights as those of any other man on earth; and that these proud nobles, in their gilded garments, are but of the same clay as you and I, without one difference between us and them, except that some braver and more powerful robber than themselves chanced to be the founder of their race, and to snatch from our ancestors the lands that they now possess? To prevent us from ever taking back our own, they have called us villeins—serfs; they have prescribed to us certain garments as a badge of our slavery; forbidden us the use of all but certain weapons, even to defend our lives against the beasts of the forest or the field. They have denied us practice and skill in arms, lest we should use those arms against themselves. They keep from us all knowledge, too, lest we should learn our rights as men, the tyrant vanity of their pretensions, and their feebleness and baseness when stripped of the advantages which circumstances have given them."

"Nay, nay," replied his companion, interrupting him; "they do not keep from us all knowledge. Are we not both instances of the contrary? How very many do they themselves educate? and how very, very many of the church have sprung from our own class?"

"Ay, of the church!" replied Caillet, with a look of scorn; "granted, of the church. Nay, more, my short-sighted friend, I will concede more still: they are ready, they are anxious, when they see any one of more genius than the rest—when they see any one whose mind is fitted for great things, whose spirit and nature empower him to accomplish great enter-

prises—they are ready, I say, gladly to educate him for the church."

"And is not that noble and kind?" cried Albert, interrupting him.

"It might be so," answered the other in a sharp tone, "were it done with a good motive; but why is it they do this? Is it not to bind down the souls and bodies of the great and high-minded to a profession which affords the surest safeguard their usurpation can have, which bids us still endure, in patience, and cuts us off from all those ties of kindred which would make us feel for the wrongs of our fellow-men? The hands of the clergy cannot bear arms against the cowards that enslave us; the voice of the clergy must not be raised to bid the serf shake off his chains, the villain to cast off his bondage. This is the cause why, whenever a child is perceived of somewhat greater powers than the rest of his race, he is sent to the convent or the seminary, and bred up in the trammels of another sort of servitude, more lowering, more debasing, than that from which he escapes, because it is the servitude of the mind, because it is the villainage of the heart. And why is all this? Why is it but because they are afraid of us; because these insolent men, who, when they meet the peasant in the field scatter the dust over him with their horses' hoofs, and call him in contempt *Jacques Bonhomme*; because these very men are cowards at their hearts, and fear the very worms they tread upon?"

His young companion had listened with a thoughtful brow, a somewhat gloomy air, and an eye bent upon the ground, with sensations that prevented him for some time from making any reply. He felt that there was some truth in what Caillet said; but he felt also that it was not all true, and yet did not at once see where lay the line between the truth and falsehood. At length, however, when his companion accused the nobles, whom he had been accustomed through life to honour and to respect, of cowardice as well as tyranny, he burst forth with a laugh, not altogether gay. "Nay, nay," he cried, "nay, nay, Caillet, some of them may be tyrants, blood-thirsty, cruel tyrants: nay, we know that it is so; but they are no cowards. I would fain see you, my good friend, try your hand, with one of those who you say are afraid."

"Some day, perchance, you may," replied the other; "and wherever the fear lay, Albert, it should not be on my part. But enough of that. I am no boaster; and when the time of trial comes I shall not be found wanting. You say they are no cowards: would that France could find it so! for if she did,

these proud Englishmen would not thus be riding over the land as lords and masters. Would that France had ever found it so! for then we should not have seen King John's whole host scattered like a flock of sheep by a poor handful of famished English knights; we should not have seen eight thousand men chasing a host ten times their number; we should not have seen men drowning themselves in the fords for very terror. Out upon it! Will you tell me that at Poitiers the cowardly nobles did not betray their king and sell their country? Shame, shame upon France! If the villeins had fought at Poitiers instead of their lords, history would have had to tell another tale, and this young tiger of England, this Black Prince, Edward, would now be in chains in Paris. Out upon it, I say, that we should thus be sold by dastards into the hands of our enemies!"

He had spoken so vehemently that his companion had not an opportunity to interrupt him, though he had been very willing so to do. The moment the other stopped, however, he exclaimed, "No, Caillet, no! you are wrong, you are quite wrong. Who does not know that courage without conduct is nothing? Look at our own King John: did not the great prince who conquered him pronounce that he had done to the utmost his duties as a knight? Did you not hear the herald tell in the castle-hall how the English prince himself served him the cup at supper, and declared that he had won the fame of the best knight in that day's battle? Then look at our own noble lord, found upon the field with twenty wounds upon him: was that like a coward, Caillet? All the eight thousand noblemen who died where they stood, did they show any lack of courage?"

"No," replied Caillet, with a bitter sneer curling his lip; "no, they certainly did not. But what think you, Albert, of the twenty thousand who fled without striking a stroke? what think you of the thousands and the tens of thousands—ay, the hundreds of thousands—that were seen flying over the plains of Poitou, with nothing but their own fear pursuing them? I have said, and say again, that at Poitiers France was sold to England, not for gold, but for a worse price—fear!"

"Nay, nay," replied his companion; "you do them wrong. Have we not all heard how often, in every period of history, a momentary panic has overthrown a host?"

"Perhaps," replied Caillet, "had you been there, you would have fled too."

The young man's cheek turned red; but Caillet proceeded before he could reply, adding—

"No, Albert, no. I am well aware you would not—there is not one of us that would; and therefore it is that I say, if the peasants of France had fought at Poitiers, England would not have won so great a victory."

"I know not," replied his companion, "I know not that. All I am sure of is, that thousands of our nobles did their duty gallantly, fought well, and if they did not conquer, died or were taken prisoners when they could resist no more."

"And is that all that you are sure of, Albert Denyn?" continued his companion, in a stern and reproachful tone; "is that all you have learned? you, who so lately have travelled all the way to Poitiers to inquire about our lord? Do you not know that the country is in misery and starvation? Do you not know that the peasantry are oppressed and ground into the dust? Do you not know that even where the cruel lord of the land spares the countrymen, the bloody hand of the adventurers who ravage the country plagues them at their very hearths with fire and sword? Do you not know that the misery, the agony, and the distress of the people can reach no higher point? that they labour in the fields with their terrified eyes looking round every moment for an enemy? that they pass by the chateau and the town in haste, lest the scourge of their oppressors should reach them on the way? that they dare not sleep even in their wretched cabins for fear the robbers should be upon them? and that they lie through the miserable night in boats moored on the river or the lake, lest murder, and violation, and wrong should visit their habitations in the darkness? Do you not know all this, Albert Denyn? and do you find nothing to pity in the state of our brethren throughout the land?"

"I have heard that such things do exist," replied the other in a sad tone; "but on the road to Poitiers I saw little of them. I saw the effects of war: I saw desolated fields, and people in distress, and much mourning, and many a noble castle ruined and destroyed; but the peasant seemed to have suffered less than his lord; and I was told everywhere that the adventurers made war upon the palace, but not upon the cottage. Yet I say not, Caillet, that your representation is not just: I am aware that such great miseries exist; I am aware that want and starvation reign in some of the finest parts of France; and from my very soul I grieve for and pity the poor creatures who are so suffering."

"Ay," said Caillet, in a musing tone, "I have been told that on the side of Poitiers the famine is not so bad; but I will tell you, Albert, what I myself have seen. I have seen

a dying child clinging to the cold breast of its dead mother, and seeking nourishment in vain, while the famished father sat by, and saw, and could give no aid, because he had not seen food himself for days. This was the first sight I beheld when I was lately sent to Brie. A little farther on I came to a brighter scene, a spot in the hills, which seemed to have escaped the scourge of war, and to enjoy as much happiness as yet remained in France. The fields were rich and plentiful—it was, then, you know, the time of harvest—and abundant sheaves of corn loaded the ground. I even heard a peasant singing—a sound that had not met my ear for many a day; but suddenly I saw a band of men come down from the neighbouring castle with carts and waggons, many a train; they came into those fields; they took up that harvest; they loaded their waggons therewith; they asked no man's leave; they gave no man an account: all they said was, that it was for their lord's ransom—their lord, who had been taken while flying like a coward from the field of Poitiers. I turned to look for the man who had been singing; and saw him sitting with the tears flowing from his eyes, thinking of the coming winter and the misery of his wife and children. I rode on as fast as I could go, for the sight was terrible to me; and at length I heard the sound of merriment, the tabret and the flute, and my heart rejoiced at the sound. Dishmounting from my horse, I went into the village to see what good fortune could make people so happy in the midst of misery and sorrow. It was a marriage going on, and the farmer's daughter was being led back from the church to the sound of the pipe. All that her parents could spare had been given to deck her out upon her bridal day. She was as fair a young creature as ever you beheld, not unlike our own sweet lady of the castle; and as he spoke Caillet fixed his eyes keenly upon the countenance of his companion, repeating, "not unlike, I say, the Lady Adela. Her bridegroom walked beside her, and ever and anon he turned to gaze upon her, thinking that she was his own, and never to be parted from him again. But at that moment came by a gay troop, with glittering garments, and gold, and furs, and all the good peasants bowed them lowly down before the lord of the village and his guests. So the noble stopped to speak, and to gaze upon the peasant's daughter in her bridal finery; and he said a world of gallant things to her, and told her she was as fair as any lady in the land; and then she blushed to hear such praises, and looked lovelier than before. At length he went away; but ere he had been gone half-an-hour, his people came down to summon the young

bride up to the castle, without father, or brother, or mother, or husband; and when she trembled and would not go, they took her by force; and when the bridegroom strove to rescue her, they struck him with a partisan upon the head, and left him as one dead upon the ground."

"And was he dead?" exclaimed Albert with his eyes flashing fire; "and was he really dead?"

"I know not," answered the other coldly, but in his heart well pleased to see the eagerness which he had raised in his companion; "I know not. It was no business of mine, you know, Albert; they were but peasants—villeins—serfs. 'How now, Jacques Bonhomme?' cried the lord's bailiff, as he struck the bridegroom on the head with his partisan. 'Dare you resist my lord's will?' and I heard the iron strike against the bone of his skull."

"But was he dead? What became of the bride?" demanded Albert eagerly. "You did not leave them so, Caillet? Was he dead, I say?"

"Better for him if he had been," replied Caillet, in a solemn tone: "he lived, but how long I know not. His bride did not return for several days, and she was dead ere I passed by again."

Albert Denyn pressed his hands upon his eyes, and remained for several minutes in deep thought. Caillet took care not to disturb his reverie, adding not another word to those which had produced the effect he wanted. At length Albert raised his head suddenly, and started up from the spot where they were sitting, exclaiming, "It is time that I should go, Caillet; it is time that I should go."

"Nay, nay," replied the other; "you have half-an-hour yet, and I have much to say; but I know whither you would go, and I cannot blame you. Though I grieve for you, Albert, I cannot blame you, for she is well worthy of love."

"Who? What do you mean?" exclaimed Albert Denyn. "I know not what you would say, Caillet."

"You know right well, Albert Denyn," replied Caillet; "but don't let me pry into your secrets. Once we were friends, but now you give me not your confidence; and yet I wish you well and would fain see you happy. You might be so, too, were you other than you are; but they have taken care so to enthrall you with prejudices, that I fear you will not dare to strive for the prize, were you even certain of winning it."

Albert gazed at him for a moment, and then resuming his seat, once more covered his eyes with his hands, and seemed

to fall into deep thought. Caillet also bent his look upon the ground in a musing mood; but he turned his gaze from time to time for a single moment upon his young companion, calculating all that was passing within, till at length, judging that what he had said had worked in his mind sufficiently, he once more renewed the subject.

"I cannot blame you, Albert," he said, "and you might be happy if you would; but with your feelings and your thoughts in regard to our tyrant masters, what you dream of is madness, and every thought that you give to her is but adding to your own misery."

"And it is madness in you to speak thus, Caillet," replied Albert, suddenly rising again; "utter madness! You know not what you speak of. You do *not* know my feelings nor my thoughts. You fancy that I imagine things impossible, when no such ideas ever enter into my mind. It is frenzy, William Caillet: I tell you it is sheer frenzy in you to talk thus, and would be worse in me to listen to you."

"Stay, Albert; stay yet a moment," replied Caillet, laying his hand upon his arm. "You must listen to a few words more, as you have heard so much already. You need not go to the castle yet: the capital is with the Lady Adela; and if I judged his looks last night aright, he will not thank the man who interrupts him. You may well spare me a few minutes more; and ere you again say that I know not the feelings of your heart, be a little more sure that the assertion is true."

"You do not know, you cannot know," answered Albert vehemently, but still with a sudden degree of hesitation and sinking of his voice, which showed the keen eye of his companion that he was afraid the inmost thoughts of his bosom were really discovered. Gently drawing him by the arm, Caillet made him once more sit down by him, saying, "Albert Denys, it is a friend who speaks to you. Listen, and I will show you what I know, or, if you like the term better, what I fancy."

"You are wrong—you are wrong," replied Albert as he sat down; "but speak on if you will—it matters not: I am not the madman that you think." And while his companion proceeded, he gazed forward upon vacancy with an abstracted air, as if he would fain have persuaded himself and Caillet that he was utterly indifferent to the subject of discourse.

His keen companion was not to be deceived, however; and he went on, saying, "Do you think, Albert, that I have gone on in the same dwelling with you, except during the time that you have been away at the abbey, for nearly ten years, with-

out knowing something of your mind and character? Do you think that I have lived with you so intimately the last four years, watching you every day, marking your every action and hearing your every word, without knowing the passion that has been growing up in your heart—without seeing that in some sort it is returned?"

"Hush! hush, Caillet!" replied his companion. "Returned! what mean you by returned? But I must not pretend to misunderstand you. Yet you are mistaken; in all this you are mistaken. Passion! It cannot be passion that I feel; it is too humble, too lowly, too hopeless. Oh, no, Caillet, no! call it by some other name—deep, deep devotion, if you will—respect, admiration, love: yes, love; love such as the most humble may feel for the highest, but love without even a dream of hope, without an expectation, without one presumptuous thought. Oh, no, Caillet, no! call it not passion—that is not the name."

He spoke with great agitation and eagerness, and when he had done, pressed his hand upon his brow and bent down his head upon his knee.

"Call it what name thou wilt, my good Albert," replied Caillet, with a slight sneer: "thou art far more learned than I am, though the chaplain vowed I was a good scholar too. But I say, call it what thou wilt. So that my meaning is clear, it is all the same to me."

"Returned!" continued Albert Denyn, again raising his head, and heeding not the words of his companion, but going on in the train of his own thoughts; "returned! Vain, vain imagination! Surely, Caillet, Satan must have put such a vision in your mind to tempt and grieve me. Oh, no! as we have spoken thus far, I must speak farther. I believe you love me, Caillet: I am sure, at least, you would not injure me; and I will not deny that to me there seems about that sweet lady's looks, and words, and movements, some spirit almost divine, which hallows the very ground on which she sets her foot. How often have I stood and watched for the hour of her coming forth, as weary travellers look for the rising of the sun! How often have I stood when I could not, or dared not, join the gay cavalcade, to gaze upon her from some distant tower, as she followed her father while he flew his hawks over the plains round about! How often have I contented myself, since I have lately been at the abbey, by standing in yon meadow opposite, and watching the light in her chamber window, and thinking that she sat there at her orisons, while I, too, prayed heaven to pour its blessings on her!"

"And has she not marked that service, that devotion?" said Caillet, more in the tone of an assertion than a question. "Has she not marked it, and rewarded it with smiles such as she bestows on none of all the household but yourself?"

"Smiles!" replied Albert; "oh, yes! she smiles kindly and sweetly, because she sees that I would fain please and serve her; but they are cold, cold smiles, Caillet—cold to what I feel. It is but the approbation that she gives to the devoted servant of her house; a passing casual glance, with one kindly look upon him who the moment after is altogether forgotten, but who never forgets her—no, not for one moment throughout the livelong day. Yes, Caillet, you have seen her smile upon me gently and placidly, but as the moon shines on the water—bright sweetness, without warmth. Oh, no, Caillet, no! that is no return for sensations such as mine."

Caillet laughed, and answered, "And yet you disclaim all passion, Albert! You own, however, that she smiles upon you, and all who see her know it. You acknowledge, too, that you love her, and none who have eyes and see you near her can doubt it. Nor do I deny that she is worthy of all devotion, though she deals proudly with me, as you well know. Though, when she passes by me, her head is carried more haughtily, her eye assumes a deeper fire—though to me she takes all the air of one of the proud tyrants of the land—yet I deny it not—nay, I willingly allow—that her beauty is worth the attachment of any one, whether rich or poor, noble or serf."

"Oh! more than her beauty," exclaimed Albert; "her gentleness, her kindness, her true nobility of nature—these are worth love indeed. Were she not beautiful, I could love her fully as well."

Caillet smiled again. "Had she not been beautiful," he said, "would you have ever felt so, Albert?"

"Oh, yes!" replied the other, "beyond a doubt. How many things would have made me love her! how many acts of kindness has she shown me! how much goodness that I have not deserved! Thanks be to God that I have neither known sickness nor much care in life; but when her father's horse struck me on the shoulder and cast me down upon the ground, what a cry she gave, and sprang forward to see if I were hurt! When have I asked for any favour at the hands either of our noble lord or the good prior without her seconding my prayer and ensuring its success?"

"And yet," said Caillet, "you would have me think that she does not return your affection?"

"I say again, it is but simple kindness that she feels," re-

plied Albert: "when I tell these things I speak selfishly. Are there not a thousand other motives for loving her besides these? I will ask you, Caillet, you yourself, who judge so harshly—I will ask you, I say, whether there was ever any one so tender, so gentle, so beneficent to every one who approaches her? Have we not all seen her tend upon the sick bed of a poor peasant with as much care as if that peasant had been a prince? Do you not remember, when the poor girl Marritonne died, how night after night she sat by her bedside, watching her pale face and giving her the cool drink to quench the terrible thirst that she endured?"

"I know nothing of it," replied Caillet, somewhat impatiently; "I visited not the girl's sick chamber; and you, good Albert, can but know this tale from the report of some of the serving-women."

"Nay, nay," replied Albert, "not from their report, but from my own eyesight, Caillet; for I was sent many a time by my good lord to call the lady from a task which he feared might injure her health. Twice, too, I went with him myself; so that I speak from my own knowledge, Caillet, and not from the tales of any one, however true those tales might be. But why should I pause upon one instance? Do not you as well as I know a thousand such acts? You do not doubt them any more than I do, Caillet. You but affect to do so."

"Nay," answered Caillet, "I neither doubt nor affect a doubt. Have I not already said that I hold her to be worthy of the love of any one, and only grieve, good Albert, that you are mad enough to love her, or foolish enough not to take the way of winning her?"

"Winning her!" exclaimed the other, with an indignant scoff; "you are indeed mad now, Caillet, to talk of such a thing. We have heard, it is true, of rich peasants marrying the daughters of poor lords; and the fabliau of the Villein and the Lady shows us how the daughter of a noble can shrink from such a union. But for a poor peasant like me, depending solely upon his lord's bounty, without even a title to claim that, as I was not born on this good lord's lands—for one whom he first received and protected from charity, whom he has educated from kindness, and who is wholly indebted to him for his daily bread—for such a one; I say, to dream of winning one whom the whole country is ready to seek—for whom knights, and nobles, and the princes of the land might well lay lance in rest—were somewhat worse than madness, Caillet. Try not to put such visions into my mind. You know as well as I that such things are quite impossible."

"I know the contrary," replied Caillet in a calm, determined tone. "I know that they are possible—quite possible; but I will admit that they are impossible *to you*, for you will not take the means to bring that prize within your reach which is but a short distance from your grasp. I see that it is so; and though I do not regret that I have spoken to you thus, yet I fear, Albert, I fear for your own happiness that it will be in vain. Come, let us go back."

The companions then walked slowly towards the castle, both musing and silent for some way; though Caillet, notwithstanding the air of indifference which he assumed, watched the countenance of Albert eagerly though stealthily, and tried to read thereon each passing emotion which the dangerous words he had uttered called up in his young comrade's heart. He spoke not, however, thinking that he had said enough for the day, and that at some after period he might return to the same theme.

But Albert himself was too much moved by all that he had heard to let the subject drop there; and ere they had reached the foot of the slope, he said, "Would to heaven, Caillet, that you had not spoken to me all you have this day, on that you had said more!"

"I will add more if you desire it," replied his companion. "I know that with you I am safe in uttering all that I think; but as to your wishing that I had not spoken at all, that is a weak wish, good Albert. Why should you entertain it? Is it because I have made you look into your own heart, and see things in it that you never beheld before? Is it because I have made you look around at your situation, and shown you that you are placed within reach of honour and happiness, where great glory and joy and a bright name are to be gained, if you will but seek them, although there be difficulties and dangers in the way, strong resolutions to be taken, and great exertions to be made?"

"I fear no difficulties, I fear no great exertions," exclaimed Albert, eagerly; "but you have not shown me this——"

Caillet went on, however, without heeding, his fine countenance assuming an expression even more stern than that which it usually bore. "Or is it because I have placed before your eyes that which every Frenchman should know, whatever be his rank, whatever be his class; namely, the dreadful state to which the land has been reduced by the baseness of the class that call themselves noble; because I have shown you how shamefully they abuse the power that they shamefully possess—how the poor wretched groans throughout the

land—and how dark a debt of crime and sorrow is daily accumulating against the rich, the powerful, and the great, which must one day be paid, and that ere many years be past?”

Albert heard the latter part of Caillet's speech in silence; but in the end replied, after musing a moment or two over what had been said, “Caillet, I do not understand you clearly; but it is none of all these things that I wish I had never heard. The words you have spoken this day have kindled thoughts in my mind which but for you could never have been there. You are right well aware that Hope once roused can sleep no more, and that whatever she has seized remains in her grasp for ever. Why or wherefore you know best; but I see, Caillet, I see clearly that you have carefully tried to raise hopes in my bosom which should never be there, and which it must now be the study of my life to forget. Would to heaven you had never done this! But as you have, you must tell me why it has been done, why you should seek to encourage feelings that you know can but make me miserable—thoughts that are worse than idle vanity—that are wicked, presumptuous, evil.”

Caillet gazed upon him for a moment in silence ere he replied, with a look that had something contemptuous in it. The expression of scorn, indeed, was so constantly upon his countenance, that it was difficult to tell whether the curl of his lip proceeded from some secret emotion of the mind or merely from an accidental movement of the features; but Albert, who knew him well, saw that look, and was not pleased with it; and although it passed away in a moment, he remembered it when it was gone, and recalled it afterwards, when many circumstances had changed their relative position to each other.

“My answer to your question,” said Caillet at length, “is very simple. I have done all this that you say, in the hope of promoting your happiness. I have done it because the feelings that you speak of need not necessarily produce evil, or sorrow, or disappointment; because, if you would yield to reason, give your own mind sway, and exert those talents that God has bestowed upon you, the very wishes and the hopes that you entertain might lead to the greatest results, and be beneficial both to yourself and to your country.”

“Still, still,” replied Albert, “I know not what you mean. I must hear more, Caillet: I must hear all.”

“You shall,” answered Caillet; “you shall hear all, Albert, and I would fain tell you all now; but, lo! there comes the train of the good prior over the hill, and we must both return

to the château. One word, then, for all, before we go. The state of misery in which France exists cannot endure much longer; the bondage in which we, the peasantry of France, are kept must soon come to an end. Ere long the rights now withheld will be struggled for and regained; men will recover the privileges of men, and will cast from them the yoke of others not more worthy than themselves. We are on the eve of great events; and when they come to pass, if you but choose the side of honour and freedom, you will win your own happiness, as well as give happiness to thousands. I ask you to take no active part," he continued, seeing a cloud come over his companion's brow at the vague hints which he gave — "I ask you to take no active part *as yet*, but merely to watch events as they arise, to judge sanely and act nobly."

As soon as he had uttered these words, Caillet, fearful that anything more might startle and alarm his companion, left what he had said to work out its effect, and to familiarise the mind of Albert Denyn with thoughts of change and strife, with which ideas he had, as we have seen, contrived to mingle hopes and expectations the most likely to have effect upon a young and inexperienced mind. Without pausing, then, to permit any further questions to be addressed to him at the time, he hurried his pace back towards the castle, which they reached not long before the arrival of the train of horsemen whom they had seen coming over the hill.

THE JACQUERIE.

CHAPTER V.

THE sweet hours of the morning! There is nothing on earth like the sweet hours of the morning! It is the youth of the day, and the childhood of all things is beautiful. The freshness, the unpolluted freshness of infancy hangs about the early moments of the dawn; the air seems to breathe of innocence and truth; the very light is instinct with youth and speaks of hopes. Who is there that loves beauty and brightness, and does not enjoy the early hours of the morning?

Such, at least, was not the case with the Captal de Buch. Of all the heroic followers of that heroic prince whose deeds occupy so great a space in the annals of British glory, one of the most feeling, one of the most imaginative, one of the most chivalrous, in the best and highest sense of the word, was that famous leader, who led the small body of horse which by a sudden and unexpected charge contributed so much to win the battle of Poitiers. His whole life proved it, and his death not less so.

Although I know not that he has left anything like verse behind, yet it is evident that his heart overflowed with the true spirit of poetry; and often in the camp or the fortress, when he had spent a great part of the night in watching, he would rise betimes like any common soldier in the army, to mark the bright dawning of the day and enjoy all the fresh beauties of the early morning. It was so even now in the Castle of Mauvinet; and with the first stirrers in the place he was on foot, and gazing forth from the window of his chamber upon the clear grey coming of the autumnal day. Each object that his eye rested on suggested some new train of thought, excited some fresh current of feelings; and he stood for more than an hour, sometimes turning his eyes upon the soldiers below as they wrestled and pitched the bar, sometimes gazing up towards the hills, and marking the gleams and shadows which the floating clouds cast upon the meadows and the woods.

In his fanciful mood he compared those meadows and woods

to man and his ever-changing fate and fortunes, now looking bright and smiling, now plunged into gloom and obscurity, and all by objects which are but vapour, blown hither and thither by the breath of accident. For the autumn colours of the woods, too, he would have a likeness; and he thought that that rich brown was like the hue of mature life, when the vigorous fruits of judgment and experience are succeeding to the green leaves and fresh flowers of youth. All things, in short, excited his imagination at that moment, even more than was usually the case; for the fair being with whom he had passed a few short hours on the preceding night had awakened sensations which always more or less rouse Fancy from her slumbers, even in the most dull and unideal breast.

As he thus stood and gazed, he marked the youth who had conducted him hither on the preceding night walking forward, as we have shown, with his companion towards the hill; and when once his eye lighted on him, he continued to look after him, not exactly watching his movements, but with a certain feeling of interest for which it was difficult to account.

"It is strange," he said to himself, after a time—"it is strange how we sometimes feel towards persons, the first time we behold them, sensations totally different from those which we ever experience towards others—affection, dislike, confidence, esteem. I remember once being told by an old priest, who thought much of such things, that when we find such an interest suddenly arise in our hearts, without being able to discover any real cause either reasonable or unreasonable, we may be sure that our fate is some way connected with that of the person who has excited it; and that sooner or later, perhaps many years after, our weal or woe will be affected by our acquaintance with him. I must hear more of that youth, for it is strange why I should experience sensations towards him different from those called forth by any other peasant that one meets with every day. Who is that with him, I wonder?—a tall, powerful fellow, who would make a good billman in case of need."

The capital continued to gaze for some time, till at length a sewer with one of his own attendants summoned him to breakfast; and descending he found the whole of the party of the castle assembled in the hall, except the Lady Adela, who sent him kindly greeting; but did not appear herself.

An old knight, whose years and station placed him highest in the household of the Seneschal of Touraine, led the capital by the hand to the seat of honour, and then sat down beside him. But as it is not the object of this book to describe the

particular customs of the day, and rather its intent to deal with the men than the manners of the times, I shall pass over all the ceremonies of the breakfast, though those were days in which ceremonies were not few, and proceed at once to the moment when, the capital having finished his meal and washed his hands, the old knight we have mentioned invited him in his lady's name to visit her in her own apartment.

The capital followed willingly enough; and when he saw Adela de Mauvinet by the morning light, he thought her still more beautiful than on the preceding night. Her young brother was with her; and again and again they both thanked him, not only for the good tidings that he had brought, but for the kindness which had prompted him to bring them that intelligence himself. The capital, according to the custom of the day, denied all merit, but yet was not sorry to hear such words from such lips; and as the boy was very like his sister, he bestowed on him the caresses that he could not offer to her. A short time thus passed joyfully; but the interview was not destined to be long uninterrupted, for a few minutes after the door opened, and Albert Denyn appeared, with a familiarity that somewhat surprised the capital.

He was received by the lady with a smile, which for an instant made a strange feeling of displeasure pass through the warrior's heart, though he would have laughed if any one had told him he was in love with the lady, or jealous of the peasant page. The demeanour of the youth himself was all respect and reverence; his countenance was grave, and even melancholy, and all his tones were sad.

"I come, lady," he said, as soon as he entered, "to tell you that my lord the prior must be even now at the gates. I saw him riding over the hill with a large train, and hastened to inform you, as I thought you might wish to meet him on the steps."

"Oh! yes, yes!" cried the Lady Adela joyfully; "let us go, let us go! You know my dear uncle already, my lord capital," she continued, "and can well judge what joy his presence gives me whenever he can come hither."

"I have seen him but once, sweet lady," replied the capital; "but after that once I need no assurance that his disposition is one to win love as well as respect from all who know him well."

"You do him but justice," replied the lady, suffering him to take her hand to lead her down; "you do him but justice, as you will each day feel more and more, when longer acquaintance shows you his heart more fully."

The trail of the prior had not yet passed the causeway when the Lady Adela, the captal, and the lady's brother, followed by Albert Denyn, reached the steps which led from the great gates down to the open space between it and the barbican. A number of the retainers of the castle were already congregated there to receive the brother of their lord; but with confusion somewhat unusual they were gathered into separate groups, speaking low together, and fixing their eyes with a degree of anxiety upon the troop that approached, which was certainly larger than the train with which the good prior generally travelled. All made way, however, for the lady and her company, and she paused upon the steps while the new-comers advanced across the causeway, three abreast, and then passed the barbican.

As they came nearer, however, the eye of the captal lighted up with a look of eagerness. The young Lord of Mauvinet laid his hand suddenly upon his sister's arm, and the next instant Adela herself, with a cry of joy, darted down the steps like lightning, and in a moment was clasped in the arms of a noble-looking man, who followed close upon the right of the prior. Her little brother sprang after her as fast as his young limbs would carry him, and he also, with tears of pleasure, was pressed to his father's heart, while the acclamations of the retainers round about rent the air; and the glad faces that everywhere presented themselves told how truly loved a feudal lord might make himself, if he chose to exercise the great power that he possessed with benevolence and humanity.

As soon as he had received the welcome of his children, the Lord of Mauvinet turned to the Captal de Buch and greeted him as a well-loved friend; but his next salutation, to the surprise of that nobleman, was given to the youth Albert Denyn. To him the count extended his hand; and though the youth bent down to kiss it respectfully, the seneschal pressed his with fatherly kindness, saying, "I have heard, Albert, of all that you did to discover me, or at least to find my bones, at the peril of your own life and liberty. I knew, my boy; that your love would not fail me, and I thank you much."

The young man heard him in silence, without venturing a word in reply; but tears rose in his eyes, while his look spoke how happy his lord's commendation made him; and bowing low, he retired speedily amongst the throng, with reverence to the prior as he passed, and one brief glance towards the captal and the Lady Adela.

From feelings that he could not explain, the captal watched the youth with perhaps more attention than he had ever

before bestowed on any person of the same rank; but, just and generous under all circumstances, he admitted to his own heart that the young man's demeanour fully justified that affection and esteem which the whole family of his lord displayed towards him.

As may well be supposed, after his long absence and supposed death, there was many a one to claim the Lord of Mauvinet's attention, and to congratulate him upon his return; and for all he had some kindly word, which sent them away content with the courtesy which they had received. Amongst the rest the baron remarked Caillet, spoke to him kindly and familiarly, but not in the same terms of confidence and regard which he had used towards Albert Denyn. His notice, however, called the attention of the captal to the striking person of the young peasant; and he gazed at him for some time, examining with keen and experienced eyes a countenance which might well afford matter of curious speculation.

It appeared that the result was not satisfactory to the captal, for his brow became slightly contracted; and walking beside the prior's mule, he asked him, "Who is that strong, good-looking youth, my lord prior, with whom your brother is now speaking?"

"His name is Caillet," replied the prior: "he is a young man of great talent, born on my brother's estates in Beauvois. The good chaplain tried to make a priest of him, but failed—not for want of quickness on the part of his scholar, but from somewhat too great quickness and a strength of determination not easily mastered. What he thought fit to study he acquired with surprising ease, and much he learned that good Father Robert would fain have prevented; but what he did not choose to apply to, nothing on earth would make him look at."

"I should judge so," replied the captal, "from his face: a sturdy and determined spirit is written in every line, and no slight opinion of himself."

"He is not humble," replied the prior, but made no other comment.

When they had passed on into the chateau, one of the first tasks of its lord was to beseech the Captal de Buch to spend some short time, as a guest in the Castle of Mauvinet; and, to say the truth, the captal had no strong inclination to refuse; for bright eyes were there which had about them a strange fascination, that the heart of the gallant knight was not well calculated to resist. He agreed willingly, then, to

and ten days with his noble prisoner in the forest sports of those times; and the Lord of Mauvinet sincerely rejoiced to secure the society of one whom he had learned to love and to respect during the tedious hours of his captivity in England.

Let us leave the count for a time, however, in the embraces of his children and the first delights of his return, and turn to others with whom we shall have more to do than even with that nobleman himself. The capital, on his part, knew that there are moments when the society of any one, however friendly, may be a restraint upon feelings which require full indulgence; and not long after they had entered the castle he drew the Prior of Montvoye aside, saying, "You have ridden far this morning, my good lord prior, otherwise I would claim your company for a walk in the sunshine yonder under the castle wall; but if you will be a guest of my chamber for half-an-hour, I would fain ask you a question or two about my young guide of last night, and make you a proposal about him, which may perhaps meet your views and his, perhaps not; but which you shall decide when you have heard it fully."

"I am no way fatigued, my good lord," replied the prior, "and will willingly be the comrade of your walk. Albert is as good a youth as ever lived, and right gladly shall I hear anything for his advantage."

Leaving the count and his children, then, alone, the prior and the capital issued forth, and took their way through the many square courts of the castle, into the depth of which, enclosed as they were by tall buildings, the sunshine rarely found its way, except at noon, till they issued forth by one of the posterns upon the meadow under the walls, which we have already more than once mentioned. They there again paused to gaze at the scene around, both enjoying greatly the picturesque beauties of the landscape.

It would be an egregious mistake to suppose that in that age, however rude and barbarous in some respects, there did not exist a love for, and fine appreciation of, all that is beautiful in this world in which our lot is cast. The very architecture of the time shows that such a feeling of the graceful and the sublime existed: the fifteenth century followed soon after, with all its miracles of art; and even at the time of which I speak, there was many a person living who had in his own bosom as much of the spirit of the picturesque as a Prout or a Turner, though he had not a knowledge of how to represent for others that which he felt so keenly.

After having gazed, then, for some moments over the fair

prospect which was to be seen from the meadow, the captal turned to the prior to resume the subject of their discourse, first commenting for a moment, as was natural, on that which had just occupied his attention. "This is as sweet a spot, my lord prior," he said, "as ever I beheld—calm, bright, and beautiful."

"Heaven keep it peaceful, too!" replied the prior. "We have as yet luckily escaped here many of the horrors of war; and I trust it may be long ere we know anything of that desolating power. But you, of course, noble captal," he continued, "cannot look upon the sad pursuits of strife with the same horror that I do."

"I suppose not, good father," replied the captal: "each man has in this world his vocation; and I cannot but think that war, when honourably waged and justly undertaken, is the most noble calling that man can have. So it would seem, too, thinks the youth of whom we were speaking. From what you said, I took an interest in him, and I asked him some questions on the road last night. His answers pleased me well: he seems frank and true. But I have lived long enough in the world, good prior, to know that frankness is sometimes assumed as one of the *cunningest* cloaks for *cunning*; and I would fain know from you what is this youth's real disposition."

"He is truth and honour itself, my lord," replied the prior. "In no rank have I ever found so much sincerity, so much unvarying uprightness of heart, so scrupulous a regard for plighted faith, so knightly a scorn of falsehood."

"The character you give him is high indeed," replied the captal; "doubtless, too, he is brave: at least he has the air, the eye, of a brave man."

"Ay, and the heart," answered the prior. "After that sad field of Poitiers, when terror and consternation spread over the whole kingdom, and every day brought past this place parties of fugitives, each full of wild tales of English bands pursuing, ravaging the country round, and slaying all they met with—when the dauphin himself scarcely dared to pause for half-an-hour to take some light refreshment here, and when his own attendants told the same tale of the whole land being covered by your troops—that lad, when no other would go, went holdly to the very field of Poitiers itself to seek his lord, and at no persuasion would take the cognisance of the house of Mauvinet from his bonnet."

"He was quite safe," said the captal; "we warred not with peasants."

"True, my lord; true, my lord," replied the prior; "but that mad disease, terror, has its delirium, like all other fevers; and our peasantry fled as fast as many of their lords, or even faster. It was vain to argue, it was vain to reason with them. Day after day brought new rumours, each more wild and foolish than the former. No man consulted his understanding; no man believed aught but the last tale of terror which the day brought forth; and in some parts of the country the fields and villages were quite deserted. Why, the very ferries over the river were in many places left without boats or boatmen. But in the midst of all this Albert pursued his way, and searched for his lord far and near for several weeks."

"He is such as I thought him," replied the captal; "and what I was going to propose as a favour to him, I shall now ask, my good lord, as a favour to myself. His taste it seems is for arms. In France he can never hope to rise higher than a mere common soldier of some commune, or at best the constable of a band of burgeoises. In England such distinctions are not to be found. The noble, it is true, are still noble, but we have no such things as villeins; they have been long done away in that land, though at one time the custom did exist there as well as in France. With us in Gascony there are villeins enough; but if you will give the youth to me, he shall serve in my band till I can get him better service in England. And as I must pass my leisure time whilst this truce exists in seeking some feats of arms elsewhere, doubtless he may gain some renown, which will obtain for him consideration in a country where great deeds are always honoured, let the doer of them be whom he may. This is the proposal that I have to make, my lord prior, in regard to your young client. I thought of offering it last night when you spoke about his wish for arms, but I judged it better to wait till I had seen farther. What say you? shall it be so?"

Somewhat to the surprise of the Captal de Buch, the prior hesitated ere he replied, and then answered, "I must consult my brother first, my good lord. It is he who brought up the youth, not I: he has only been resident with me since the battle, when I thought it best that he should be at the abbey."

"May I inquire, good father," demanded the captal, "was there anything in his conduct to show that he could not be trusted except under your eye?"

"No, no," answered the prior, eagerly; "nothing of the kind, my good lord. But my brother, who had his own views for him, being supposed dead, I saw no fate before him but the cloister or the priest's office, and it was with the object of

providing for him thus that I took him. Now, however, that the count has returned in safety, he of course must act before; and I must either refer you to him, or consult with him upon the subject myself, before I give you a reply."

"Consult with him by all means," answered the captal. "If you think what I have proposed advantageous for the youth, well. I am ready to do my best for him. If not, it is well also: only I do beseech you, my good lord prior, do not make him a priest against his will; for if you do, the community will suffer fully as much as himself."

"Far be it from me," replied the prior, smiling, "and I feel very sure that I might at once accept your offer; for I know that my brother seeks nothing but Albert's good, and your proposal is most generous and kind. Nevertheless, there are some things to be considered, of which I will speak with you more hereafter; but in the mean time I thank you gratefully on Albert's part for the bounty that you show him."

The captal bowed somewhat stiffly; for from what the prior had said the day before, he had not doubted that he would eagerly avail himself of any means to promote the young peasant's wishes for a military life; and it must be remembered that the offer of the knight was one that might well be received with gladness, even by a youth of the very highest rank. Renown in arms was then the first claim to reverence from all classes; and the fame of the captal as a commander was scarcely second to that of any one in the days wherein he lived. In that famous order of chivalry which, both from its priority in point of time and the renown of those who have borne it, leaves every other but a mere shadow—I mean the Order of the Garter—his name stands fifth amongst the founders, and with only one subject between him and princes of the royal blood; and in those times that distinction was held far higher than even now. Well might the captal think that the offer he made in favour of a mere French peasant was one of no slight kindness; and well might he feel somewhat surprised that the prior should receive it with any hesitation, however slight. He pressed the matter no farther, then, at the time; but after speaking gravely with his companion on other subjects, he returned with him to the hall, jested for a few minutes with some of the French gentlemen present, displayed his great muscular powers and skill in one or two feats of strength, and then retiring to his chamber, was heard singing to an instrument of music, which was always borne with him by one of his train. At dinner, too, he was somewhat grave; but afterwards, as the shades of evening were begin-

ning to fall he was seen walking with the prior and the Count of Neuvinet, and bearing a lighter countenance, while all three spoke in somewhat low tones together, and the attendants kept far behind. They were at this time beyond the great moat and under a small hanging wood. As they proceeded, something was heard to rustle amongst the brown leaves within ear-shot of the pages. "There is a wolf!" cried one of the boys, throwing a stone into the covert; but the sound instantly ceased, and they passed on.

CHAPTER VI.

NEARLY a fortnight passed over in the Château of Mauvinet without any one incident worthy of remark, and yet there is much to tell. The small things of life are often more important than the great, the slow than the quick, the still than the noisy. The castle, and the palace, and the church stand for years the raging of the wind, the beating of the rain, the red bolt of the lightning, yet crumble down beneath the quiet touch of Time, without any one seeing where and when the fell destroyer is at work. There may well be no great incident, and yet a change the most happy or the most disastrous may have taken place in the space of a few short days.

There was then, as we have said, much to tell, though there was no marked event upon which the pen of the narrator can dwell. There had been forest sports, the hunting of the boar and the wolf; there had been the flight of the falcon over the valleys and the plains around; there had been gay autumnal evenings within the castle walls, with the blazing fire, and the cheerful tale, and the song of chivalry and love, and the sharp *sirvente*, and sometimes the merry dance. In fact, the time had passed so gaily that one might almost have forgotten the terrible state of the country around, had it not been that from time to time a report reached the castle of outrages committed by this and that band of marauders; and once rumour brought the adventurers so near that the Lord of Mauvinet and the Captal de Buch both rode out armed to give them the encounter and drive them forth from Touraine. The report proved false, however, and was in fact merely one of those tales of terror which circulated from mouth to mouth throughout the land.

On all these things it is unnecessary to dwell longer, as they afford no matter of interest but for those who may be inclined to study deeply the manners of the times; but day by day, and hour by hour, and moment by moment, feelings were coming into the bosom of the Captal de Buch, such as he had never before experienced. Ere a week was over, he had

fully determined to demand the hand of Adela de Mauvinet, and the rest of the fortnight he employed in eagerly seeking her regard.

Love in a young and timid man may often, from its very newness and intensity, baffle its own endeavours; it may obscure high talents and bright qualities, and weigh down the eager and the ardent spirit, and even the active and powerful mind, so that the lover may appear in the very worst light to the person he most wishes to please; but with knowledge and experience of the world, and that confidence in one's own powers, that just appreciation of ourselves, which nothing but such knowledge of the world can give, love produces none of those results, but on the contrary stimulates every nerve to exertion, acuminates every faculty of the mind and the body, and teaches us to display to the very best advantage every grace or perfection that we may happen to possess.

Such, then, was the case with the Capital de Buch. He certainly loved deeply and well; he felt for Adela what he had never felt for any one else; and his whole mind was bent upon obtaining her regard. But those very sensations only induced him to put forth his great power of pleasing, called into activity the vigour of his mind, and taught him to use all those means which, he knew right well, are the most successful with the female heart. He was constantly by her side when the opportunity presented itself. The tone of his conversation was that which seemed best to accord with the general character of her own mind; and yet the brilliancy of his thoughts, the richness of idea which had been acquired by seeing many scenes, mingling with many events, and frequenting many courts, gave a sort of sparkling effect to his conversation, even when, as I have said, it took its general hue from the character of her with whom he spoke. It was as if his mind was a magic mirror which reflected hers, but gave additional brilliancy to all the images it received.

And yet—for generally in this world there is some fatal abatement to the pleasure of the day—there was something in the manner of Adela that surprised, disappointed, and grieved the capital. That she did not dislike his society was evident; that his words, his manners, and his accomplishments were justly appreciated by her, was also clear; but still there was an indescribable something in her manner which showed him that he did not make that progress in her heart which he so ardently desired.

On almost all subjects she spoke with him willingly, cheerfully; but there was one on which she spoke not at all.

When he talked of love she was silent—love, I mean, in the abstract, or with reference to others; for his own love towards her he had never yet ventured to tell. The moment the subject was mentioned, Adela replied not, unless she was forced to do so, and when such was the case answered but vaguely, and generally fell into a fit of musing, from which the captal found it difficult to rouse her. He knew not how to account for such conduct; it appeared to him strange, and certainly alarmed him; but still he was sufficiently in love to listen eagerly to anything that Hope whispered. He thought to himself, "She is so young, she knows not yet what love is;" and still he went on in the same course, with little fear of ultimate success.

To those who knew her well, however, a change might have been seen in Adela herself. She had become graver, more thoughtful; at times, even somewhat sad. She showed no distaste to the society of the captal: how could she to that of a man who had saved her father's life, who had been his friend in adversity, and who had cheered for him the hours of captivity and sorrow? But still there was not that alacrity in going forth with him which might have been expected from her character in times of old. The bounding joy with which at one time she would have sprung to meet the deliverer of her parent was no longer seen.

The count himself remarked that it was so, and he too thought it strange, although he doubted not, and could not doubt, the affection of his child. Still it struck him as extraordinary—the more so, indeed, from all he knew of Adela's character. There were others who marked the difference likewise, and on whom it made the same impression. To Adela no one said anything, however; and she remained not only unconscious that the coldness in her demeanour towards the captal had been perceived, but in truth unconscious that there was a coldness. Had she known it, she would certainly have been greatly grieved; but whether she would have changed or not, who can say?

Thus passed the time with her. With her father it may have been somewhat different. It seldom happens, I believe, that parents, even the most anxious and careful, become aware of the attachments which their children inspire, or of the affections which they feel, till the time to prevent the danger is over. Loving Adela as he did, the count naturally thought that she was worthy of all admiration; and in the captal's attention towards her he saw nothing but what might naturally be expected from so gallant a knight towards so fair a

lady. In the end, indeed, he thought that there was sometimes a sparkling brightness in his guest's eyes, which betrayed a greater degree of warmth than the mere courtesy of the day required; but he marked it little, though others marked it much, and he gave no thought to the question, whether it would please him well to see his daughter united to the great English leader.

There was another in regard to whom we must also trace the passing of the time, although he may seem a very insignificant personage amongst those of whom we have been lately speaking. That personage was Albert Denyn, and he had also undergone a change. He, too, had become sad, and thoughtful, and gloomy. Smiles had nearly forsaken his countenance since the capital entered the Castle of Mauvinet; and he was seen, day by day, wandering through the woods and over the hills around, with his eyes fixed upon the dull grove, as if questioning his mother earth of his hard destiny, and finding no reply; or sitting gazing on the hilt of the sword, which he, as well as Caillet, and several other favourite attendants of the Lord of Mauvinet, were permitted to wear—as if demanding why the hand which could use it as bravely as any lord in the land should not be held as noble as that of others less worthy.

He seemed to avoid the society of all. The tilt-yard and the meadow where the soldiery used to practise, and where he himself had a sort of prescriptive right to mingle with others of nobler birth, now beheld him no more; and even Caillet, who, though he in general sought conversation with few in the castle, now looked for every opportunity of speaking with him, found none without great difficulty, and even when he did obtain a moment, met with interruption almost as soon as their conference began.

The capital, from motives secret even to himself, watched the young peasant, whenever he happened to be in the same chamber with him, and more especially when Adela was there; but he saw nothing but what the youth's station in the Household of the lady's father warranted. There were deep respect and reverence, zeal and affection, in his manner; but he was humble and calm withal, without presumption in look or word.

The capital took it for granted in the end that the youth's melancholy was habitual, but others knew better; and more than one of those who had been accustomed to see him the gayest of a thousand gay hearts now questioned him regarding his sudden gloom. Amongst the rest was the prior; but

the good father, forced to reside at the abbey, and paying but short visits to his brother's castle, saw not many of those slighter traits which might perhaps have directed his judgment aright, could he have watched them; and thus he attributed Albert's sadness to motives very far from the real ones.

"My dear son," he said, one day, when he was riding over to the castle, and found the youth upon the hills by the way, "I have remarked with grief the gloom that hangs upon you; for I cannot but ascribe it in some degree to what my brother and myself have yielded to, out of kindness for you, without dreaming that it could produce pain and sorrow instead."

The youth started and turned red, but instantly became pale, demanding, "What mean, you, father? I know not to what you can allude."

"Nay, my son," answered the prior, "I saw this sadness fall upon you the moment we mentioned what we considered the splendid offer made in your favour by the noble Captal de Buch; and I have marked the gloom coming deeper and deeper every day since, so that I cannot be mistaken."

Albert paused a moment, but his heart was too pure and too true to suffer him to take advantage of the good prior's mistake, even to hide the many feelings within his bosom that he dared not to avow; and in this, as in all things, he spoke the plain truth. "Indeed, dear and noble sir," he said, "you are mistaken. When you told me of the generous offer of the captal, I became grave, perhaps because my heart was filled with two strong emotions—joy to see what I had scarcely deemed possible fulfilled, and yet sorrow to part with many dear and true friends such as I shall never find again. Oh, my lord! can you suppose that, after all the kindness you have shown me, I can think of the hour that must separate me from your paternal care, perhaps for ever, without a painful feeling of apprehension and regret? Can I either think of leaving my noble lord your brother, or our sweet Lady Adela, without deep grief? Oh, no, my lord! This, I assure you, was all that called a shadow over my face when first you told me of the captal's offer; and since then, perhaps other things—fancies, wayward fancies—apprehensions of never seeing those I love again, or seeing them changed towards me—or—or—a thousand idle dreams, have made me sad; but this will all pass away when I am gone."

"Fear not, Albert," replied the prior, gazing on him with

a look of approbation and regard. "Fear not. We shall meet again, and perhaps in happier circumstances than the times I quit of at present. Fear not that you will find us changed. We are not of a race that change. Only act honourably wherever you may be, and you will learn that we are still the same under all circumstances."

"I trust I ever shall act honourably, my lord," replied Albert. "I have but one apprehension, and that is, that I may at some time be compelled to lay down those arms which I am now about to bear, by being called to use them against France; and should that be —"

"No fear! no fear!" exclaimed the prior: "the captal has plighted his word that such an act shall never be required of you, my son. If that idea has disturbed you, let it do so no more; for you know that his word is never broken."

The youth kissed the good monk's hand in sign of gratitude; but, notwithstanding such assurance, Albert was not gayer than before. For the day, indeed, he made an effort, but ere night fell he had sunk back into deeper gloom than ever. Even in the hall, after supper, a dark fit of thought came upon him, and he stood silent and sad, with his gaze fixed upon the pavement, while all were laughing and jesting around, till, suddenly raising his head, he found the eyes of the Lady Adela resting upon him with a look little less sorrowful than his own. He started and turned away, and strove for the rest of the evening to assume a more cheerful air when he passed the spot where she sat; but the sight of the Capal de Buch placed beside her, and striving by every means to win her attention and regard, was not calculated to cheer the heart of Albert Denyn.

On the morning following, however, from one of the windows at which he had watched the sun rise with eyes that had not been closed all night, he beheld the captal and the Lord of Mauvinet walk forth together unattended; and knowing that, at that hour the great hall of the castle was likely to be vacant, he proceeded thither to indulge his thoughts more at ease than in the narrow space of the small room which he tenanted in one of the turrets. Intense thought may take place in narrow chambers: the mathematician may pursue his calculations, the philosopher his reasonings, the politician his schemes, within the straitest confines; but where strong emotions of the heart mingle with the deeper workings of the brain, the spirit within us seems to pant for space, and the movement of the mind requires room for the movements also of the corporeal frame. Albert Denyn felt relieved in the

great hall, where he could now be quite solitary. It seemed as if the busy thoughts within his bosom found freer play. There he walked to and fro for some minutes alone, stopping from time to time to gaze out of the window, till at length, seeing the capital and the count on their way back towards the chateau, he paused for a moment to consider whether he would await their coming where he was or retire again to his own chamber. He felt, however, that his thoughts at that moment were too painful to endure the presence of others, and turning away, he passed along the corridor which led from room to room by the principal apartments of the castle, intending to mount to the turret in which he slept by a small staircase at the end.

Ere he reached the farther extremity of the gallery, however, he beheld the Lady Adela coming towards him, and for an instant he hesitated what to do; but he soon saw that she had remarked his presence, and he advanced, making a lowly bow as he approached her.

Adela, however, paused when he came near, cast a hurried glance around the corridor to assure herself that they were alone, and then said, "Albert, what is it that makes you so sad? Why are you so changed, so gloomy? Has anything gone wrong with you?"

"Nothing, lady; nothing indeed," replied Albert: "far from it—all has gone well—well in a way that I could not have hoped."

"Then what is the cause of your gloom, Albert?" she asked; "what is the occasion of the melancholy that hangs upon you?"

Albert Denyn was shaken with agitation, so that his very limbs trembled; his countenance was as pale as death, and his breath seemed to come hard. Adela marked all those signs of strong emotion, and as he did not answer, she added in a gentle tone, "Nay, nay, Albert, you must speak: we have been brought up together almost all our lives, and you will not surely refuse to tell me—me, Albert—me you will not refuse to tell."

Albert could bear no more. "You! you!" he exclaimed. "Oh, lady! you are the last that I ought to tell!"

The words had scarcely passed his lips when the Capital de Buch entered the gallery alone, and thoughtful, with his eyes bent upon the ground. The moment he came in, however, he raised his head, and saw Albert Denyn advancing towards him, while the Lady Adela turned away with a glowing cheek and agitated air. But Albert had at once regained his calm-

ness, as soon as he became aware of the presence of a third person; for there was a depth in his sorrow which gave vigour to every effort of his mind; and he came slowly but firmly on towards the captal, reaching the spot where the knight stood at the very moment that Adela quitted the corridor by another door.

In those days there was a sort of parental power in great military leaders over the young men who attached themselves to them, which gave a right to question and to govern them, in a way that might not otherwise have been submitted to by hot and fiery spirits in the heyday of youth. It was in this tone, rather than in that of a master, that the Captal de Buch now addressed Albert Denyn, saying, "What has agitated the lady, my young friend?"

The captal himself was not free from emotion as he spoke; but Albert replied calmly, "Why she is agitated, my lord, I cannot pretend to inform you. All that passed was, that she was kind enough to ask what had made me so sad, and whether anything had gone wrong with me. I assured her that such was not the case; but she would not believe my assurance, though, as you know, my lord, from your own noble offer, all has gone better with me than I ever could have dared to hope."

The captal bit his lip, and then, fixing his eyes upon the ground, remained in thought for a moment or two. He had thus continued till Albert doubted whether he ought to retire or wait his further commands, when, raising his eyes proudly, the knight added, "If you are still inclined to accept my offer, young man, it would be as well for you to know that I shall not remain here many days longer; perhaps even to-morrow may be fixed for my departure. Are you still desirous of accompanying me or not?"

Albert gazed in the captal's face with evident surprise. "Most gratefully! most thankfully, noble sir!" he said: "I should ill deserve your favour did I even hesitate."

"You are the best judge," replied the captal in a sharp tone, and passed on towards his own apartments.

Albert remained a moment or two where the captal had left him, and then, retiring to his own chamber, spent an hour in thought.

Ere we turn to new events, however, and more active scenes than those in which we have lately engaged, we must pause to relate the conversation which had taken place between the Captal de Buch and the Count de Mauvinet during their morning walk—a conversation which, as we have seen, had

were very kind to him, and Albert is not one to forget kindness from any one."

The captal fixed his eyes upon Adéla, and then fell into a fit of musing, but made no reply to the words of the Lord of Mauvinet. He taxed his own heart, however, with want of courtesy and benevolence, in feeling pain at hearing the commendation of any good man.

"This is not right," he said to himself; "this is not right. If the youth deserves praise, praise let him have—ay, and let him win honour and renown too, if God so wills it."

Let us not pause in this place upon the expedition which was now undertaken by the party from the château. The circumstances under which they went were distressing to all the principal personages concerned. The feelings of the count and the captal may be easily conceived; and could any one have seen into the bosom of the fair girl who rode between them, her state of mind would have appeared even more painful; for, from various minute facts which had come to her knowledge in the course of the preceding day, Adela had discovered that the deliverer of her father entertained towards her a passion which she could not return. His conduct had lately alarmed her; and though for some time she had striven to shut the facts from her own eyes, yet the truth had forced itself upon her at last, and she had become convinced, not only that the captal loved her, but that he would demand her hand. What might be the decision of her parent she knew not; but she felt but too well that she could never entertain for the captal that affection which a wife should feel towards a husband. When she discovered such sensations in her own bosom, her first question to herself was why her heart was so cold and indifferent to one well calculated to please and to win. He had all that could attract: beauty of person, grace, and courtesy of manner; high qualities of mind; dignity and command in his whole air; he was renowned in arms, kind, generous, gay, wise, faithful, just, and true of heart: and Adela again and again asked herself why it was she could not love him. It was early on that morning that these things were passing in her mind; and, busy with such ideas, she had lingered beyond the hour at which she usually visited her father's chamber, to wish him health and happiness through the day. When she went, she found that he was already gone forth with the Captal de Buch; and a cold sensation came over her heart when she thought of what might be the subject of their conversation. As she was returning she met Albert Denyn, as we have shown, and the brief conversation which we have related took place between them. After it

was over, Adela no more asked herself why she could not love the capital, but sat down in her chamber and wept.

She had sufficient command over herself to prevent the feelings of her heart from affecting her demeanour in any great degree; but it may be well believed that her sensations were not a little sad; and the day, which had been intended to be a day of pleasure, proved in most respects one of pain to almost all the parties concerned.

When they had visited the chapel, paid their devotions at the shrine, and again taken leave of the prior, the Count de Mauvinet somewhat hurried his pace; for several delays had occurred during the morning, and the sun was beginning to decline. Those were times, too, in which, as we have before shown, it was neither safe nor agreeable to travel late at night, although the proximity of the Castle of Mauvinet, and the general tranquillity of that part of the country, seemed to promise the party of the count full security on the way. He had with him, too, a stout band of attendants; and the very presence of the Capital de Buch was in itself a host.

The sun had just touched the edge of the sky when they again came within a mile of the castle; but here they were detained for some time by an incident of deep interest to the Count de Mauvinet himself, and little less so in the eyes of the capital. They found the road at the top of the hill crowded with peasantry of the richer class, wealthy farmers, and landholders on the estates of Mauvinet, all dressed in their holiday costume, and bearing a certain expression of pleasure and satisfaction in their faces that seemed to speak of some occasion of much joy. Two or three of the principal persons were collected in front of the rest; and as the count's party approached, one of them advanced a little before the others, and respectfully stopped their lord as he was coming forward.

"What would you, good Larchenay?" said the count, bending his head a little, and addressing him with a well-pleased air. "Is there anything in which I can serve you, my friend?"

"Yes, my lord, much," replied the farmer; "and indeed we have all met here to make you an humble request, which we trust you will not deny us."

"I am not accustomed, my good Larchenay, to refuse you anything in reason," replied the Lord of Mauvinet; "and so am I to find myself amongst you all once more, that I am little likely to be hard-hearted now."

"Thanks, then, my noble lord," replied the peasant: "our request, I see, is half granted already. We have heard that to-morrow you propose to pay your ransom to the noble

Captal de Buch, yet your faithful peasantry have not been called upon to bear a share therein. It was never yet known, my lord, that the poor tenants of so noble a gentleman as yourself were refused the right of contributing to redeem their good lord; and we have collected together and brought hither our little tribute of gratitude and attachment to one who has ever been a kind master to all—who has aided us in sickness, has spared us in adversity, and protected us in danger. We know not, my lord, the exact sum at which your ransom has been fixed; but we have gathered amongst us here some ten thousand crowns, which we come to offer with a very willing heart."

The affection of his peasantry brought tears into the eyes of the Lord of Mauvinet, and he thanked them in words which were evidently not words of course, although he would fain have declined the aid tendered to him. "The peasantry of France," he said, "have suffered too much already, my good friends, for me to press upon them more, whatever others may do. This was the reason why I asked no assistance from my people: not that I doubted in the least their love for their lord, or their willingness to help him in a time of need. My ransom is provided, my friends; half is ready here, and half must be prepared by this time in Beauvoisis; and as I fixed it myself, when my noble friend here, the Captal de Buch, would scarcely accept of any, so would I also fain pay it myself, although you offer me such aid." The farmer whom he had called Larchenay heard him in respectful silence, and drew a step back with a disappointed air; but an older and somewhat ruder-looking man stepped forward, and said in a bolder tone, "My lord the count, you have never taken from us more than was your due, very often much less. It is seldom that we have an opportunity of showing our thanks. It has pleased God that you should be taken prisoner while you were gallantly defending your country, and when others had basely fled and abandoned her cause. Depend upon it, my lord, one reason why you have thus been suffered to fall into the hands of the enemy was, that your faithful peasantry might have an opportunity of showing that the poor people of France can be grateful to those who love and protect them. I beseech you, my lord, do not refuse our request, but let us pay our master's ransom; right glad as we are to get him back."

"Oh, my father!" said Adela, seeing that the count still hesitated, "pray accept it: I am sure there is not a peasant on the land who will not feel happy and proud to have contributed to your deliverance."

"Well, be it so, my good friends," said the count, with a voice trembling with emotion; "be it so. It seems as if I had gained my liberty twice, when it is my people that give it me. Come then, come to the château, and we will speak more of all this. I would fain thank you, my friends, better than I can now, when words fail me and my heart is full. Larchenay, come hither, and as we go assure me, that in these times of difficulty and distress this gift does not press upon you too heavily."

"Oh, no!" replied the good man; "on my life it does not. Thanks to your kindly care and that of your good brother, there are no peasants in France who have suffered so little as we have done. The enemy has never visited our fields; famine has never been felt amongst us: if we ever have wanted anything, it has been supplied to us, my lord, by your bounty; so that we are wealthy as well as contented, and we know that we owe that wealth to you."

Thus conversing, the Lord of Mauvinet and his peasantry, with the rest of the party which had accompanied him during the day, proceeded slowly back towards the château, while the sun set, but left the sky glowing with the glory of his departing light. They reached the foot of the slope, and were beginning to cross the meadows, which extended from the hills to the moat of the castle, when suddenly a quarrel from a crossbow struck the horse of the Capital de Buch, and the noble animal, with the blood flowing in profusion from a wound in his side, reared, and then staggered under his gallant rider.

The capital, however, though taken by surprise, sprang to the ground before the charger fell, exclaiming, "My Lord of Mauvinet, that was meant for you. Draw round your lord!"

Even while he was speaking, more serious cause of alarm appeared; for from the hanging wood which we have already mentioned rode forth at full speed a large body of men-at-arms, bearing down with levelled lances upon the little party which was crossing the meadow. The peasantry were defenceless; and one of the first thoughts of the Lord of Mauvinet was for them. He himself and all his armed attendants, as well as the Capital de Buch and his followers, hastened to cast themselves into the front and meet the shock of the enemy's charge. But the number of the assailants was far superior to their own; and it was very evident from the order in which they came on, that they were all experienced men-at-arms.

"Your horse! your horse!" cried the capital to one of his men: "give me a spear, St. John. Keep the line there, my

men! keep the line! My Lord of Mauvinet, if you take ground a little to the right, our flank will be protected by those trees. Stand firm, stand firm! St. George for merry England!"

Almost as he spoke, and while he was yet mounting the horse which had been brought up for him, the body of adventurers—for such evidently were the assailants—came up at full speed, expecting undoubtedly to find all give way before them. In this, however, they were greatly mistaken. The veteran attendants of the capital and the Count de Mauvinet presented a firm and unwavering face to the enemy, and the capital himself, causing his horse to pass by a hard stroke of the spur, at the very moment when one of the heavy-armed leaders of the enemy's troop came impetuously upon him, suffered the man to dash between him and one of his retainers; but at the same time, with his shortened lance he struck him fiercely in the throat, and hurled him bleeding to the ground.

"A good stroke!" he cried, as gaily as if the dangerous strife were but a May-day pastime. "A good stroke! St. George for merry England!"

Notwithstanding the skill of the capital and the Count of Mauvinet, and the bravery and determination of their own personal followers, the advantage was still on the side of the adversary, who, besides numbers, had the hill in his favour; and although where the two leaders were the line was kept firm and no ground lost, yet even the centre of their short phalanx was beginning to waver and give way, when some cried aloud, "They are coming from the castle! They are coming from the castle!"

The capital, while he struck down one of the adventurers with his heavy sword, turned his eyes towards the Château of Mauvinet, and saw a straggling band of men galloping over the causeway at full speed; but far before them was a horseman who seemed every moment to gain ground upon those who followed, and the capital thought he recognised, though the light was now becoming faint, the form of Albert Denyn.

"Courage! courage, my men!" cried the great leader. "Aid is at hand! Hold firm there in the centre! By heaven, they are breaking in! Down with that green plume! Strike him on the head, Martin! Down with him! down with him! It is too late!"

And he said truly; for, notwithstanding a vigorous effort made by the men in the centre to recover their position, a strong body of the adventurers forced their way through, and the line was completely broken. At that moment, however,

the first of the horsemen from the castle arrived, proving, as the Captal had imagined, Albert Denyn. His body was undefended, but his head was covered with a plain steel cap, such as the commons usually wore in the field, and in his hand was a heavy battle-axe which he had caught up in haste. His eye ran rapidly over the conflict as he came up; and although the Lord of Mauvinet cried, "Hither, Albert! hither!" he directed his course to the rear of the peasantry, forced his way through the midst of the frightened multitude, and cast himself between Adela and the man in the green plume, who had nearly reached the spot where she stood.

"He is right, he is right!" cried the Captal de Buch, spurring on his horse, and leading forward the soldiers who were near him to attack the flank of the enemy.

All he could do, however, was to break their line as they had broken the small band of the Count de Mauvinet; and the whole became a scene of strife, confusion, and disarray, in which each man was soon found fighting for his own life, and little heeding the proceedings of his comrades.

In the mean time the retainers of the house of Mauvinet were every moment reinforced by fresh arrivals from the château; and the adventurers speedily found that the day was going against them—a discovery which soon led to an attempt to rally their forces and make their retreat in an orderly manner. But the party whom they had attacked had become aware of their own advantage, and of course were but little disposed to suffer them to retire in peace.

As they drew out and endeavoured to form, the Lord of Mauvinet, seeing many of his poor tenants either wounded or killed, and indignant at the very fact of an ambush being laid so near his own castle, cagerly arrayed his men to pursue the assailants, and only paused to give one glance round, in order to ascertain that his daughter was in safety.

At the moment that he thus turned to gaze, she had dismounted from her horse, and was bending in no slight terror by the animal's side. The space around was not yet absolutely cleared of enemies, but they were now only seeking to retreat; and before her stood Albert Denyn, with his foot planted on the dead body of the man with the green plume, who had led the party of adventurers which first broke the ranks of the vassals of Mauvinet. The battle-axe which had slain him was bloody in the youth's hand, and his horse's bridle, cast over the other arm, seemed to show that he had sprung to the ground for the defence of his young mistress.

Feeling that Adela was now safe, the count hesitated no

longer, but uniting his men with those of the Captal, he urged the pursuit of the enemy fiercely, slaying many and taking several more, though in truth few condescended to ask for quarter. In the mean time Albert Denyn paused for a moment by the side of the Lady Adela, inquiring eagerly, though gently, whether she were injured.

"Oh, no, no, Albert!" she replied; "thanks to God, I am not; but, oh! help my father, Albert! help my father! See! he is pursuing them fiercely. I fear only for him."

Albert looked round, saying, "It is growing dark, lady; I cannot leave you without protection."

Adela, however, again besought him more earnestly than before to fly to the assistance of her father; and some of the peasantry around exclaimed, "We will guard her to the castle, oh! we will guard her;" but Albert did not feel well satisfied with the protection that they could give, till William Caillet, forcing his way through the rest, approached Albert, saying, "Leave her to me, Albert; I will defend the Lady Adela in case of need: you know that I well can do so."

Albert hesitated for a moment, though he knew not why; but at that instant the lady repeated, "Go, Albert! go! See! they are surrounding my father. Go! Oh, go all of you! I shall be very safe now."

Albert Denyn paused no longer, but, setting his foot in the stirrup, sprang upon his horse's back, and galloped at full speed after the Lord of Mauvinet and his party. His aid, however, was scarcely required; for the adventurers were in full retreat, and Adela's eyes had deceived her when she imagined that her father was surrounded by any but friends. The increasing darkness, too, soon put a stop to the pursuit; and the Captal de Buch, reining in his horse, said with a faint smile—

"This is but a scurvy jest, my Lord of Mauvinet, and I fear your poor peasants have suffered."

"I fear so too," replied the count in a sad tone, while he turned his horse to return to the castle. "Ha, Albert! where is Adela? why did you leave her?"

"She would have me follow you, my Lord," replied Albert Denyn; "and Caillet, who was there, promised to guard her back."

"Then she is safe! then she is safe!" said the count.

"Come, my good lord Captal: I must give you some better entertainment than this, or you will call me churlish;" and thus saying, he led the cavalcade homeward.

CHAPTER VIII.

"You had better mount, lady, and get back to the castle with all speed," said Caillet as soon as Albert Denyn had left them. "Peter the horseboy promised to bring me out a horse, but fear the knave has tailed me."

"No, no! there he stands," cried one of the peasants who heard what was said: "there he stands, and the horse with him."

"Let me help you, lady," continued Caillet, offering to assist her to her saddle, and beckoning for the boy to bring up his horse; but Adela motioned him back, saying, "I need no aid, William Caillet," and at the same time she sprang upon her well-taught jennet, which remained perfectly still till she was in the seat. "I see not," she continued, speaking to Caillet, "that you need a horse to accompany me to the castle. You can walk at my side."

"But in case we should be obliged to make more haste lady?" replied Caillet. "The enemy are still scattered about, madam. See there! and there!" and as he spoke he too leaped into the saddle.

"Then we will go quickly," said Adela, shaking her rein and turning her jennet's head towards the castle.

Caillet rode on also—not, as might have been expected from his station, a step behind, but close to her horse's side, and Adela only the more eagerly urged the beast forward. Just as they were within two hundred yards of the moat, however, some five or six horsemen passed between them and the castle at full speed, and Caillet, laying his hand on Adela's bridle-rein, exclaimed, "This way, this way, lady!"

As he spoke he turned her jennet's head towards the wood that skirted the hill; and as there seemed no other way of avoiding the party of adventurers, Adela, bewildered and confused, suffered him to do as he pleased, thinking that, as the men were evidently flying, the danger would soon be over.

In the mean while the group of peasantry which had remained on the slope of the hill continued gathered together on the same spot, engaged in the various and occupations that such an event as that which had just taken place naturally left for them to perform. There were dead amongst them to be mourned; there were wounded to be tended; the adventurers had found time, even in the midst of bloodshed and confusion, to strip several of the money which they had brought for their lord's ransom, and that also had to be lamented and commented upon. But upon the little knoll from which Adela and Caillet had departed for the castle, four or five men stood apart talking eagerly together, and not paying any attention to matters which might well interest them as well as their companions. Their eyes were fixed upon the course taken by Caillet and the lady, whom they continued to trace by Adela's white jennet, which could still be seen, notwithstanding the increasing darkness of the evening.

"Yes, yes," said one, "it is all right; you see he is going straight to the castle."

"Watch him still! watch him still!" cried another: "I love him not at all. As the lady said, why should he take a horse to go back with her a five minutes' walk? See how he rides, close to her side, too, as if he were the Captal de Buch. Some one has certainly betrayed us into the hands of these companions, otherwise they would never have come so near the castle, and I as well as Larchenay doubt him much. He was the only one that knew of our intention of bringing the money here, so far as I know; and when I was speaking with old Tourmont, the warder at the castle, just now, he told me that Caillet had been absent all this day and yesterday, and he said he wondered our lord let him go on so."

"So do I," replied an old peasant who formed one of the group; "and I am determined, for my part, to tell my lord the count that I found him persuading my second son Charles that I did not treat him well: he has been a mischief-maker in more than one house, and it is time that the thing should be stopped. So I shall let my lord know the whole without ceremony. But look there! look there, Larchenay! He is leading my young lady towards the wood: he is bent upon some mischief, depend upon it."

"I will stop him!" cried Larchenay: "if he goes up there, I can cut him off by the well path. Come with me, Peter John; come with me; quick, quick! Santa Maria! there is a scream!"

• Thus saying, he darted away up the side of the hill, took a

road through the wood, and ran at full speed for some two or three hundred yards along the narrow and intricate turnings and windings of the forest ways. He was then pausing for a moment to take breath, when another scream at no great distance reached his ears, and rushing on as fast as possible, he suddenly came to a spot where two paths met. Along the one crossing that which he himself was pursuing was coming up at the moment with furious speed the very person whom he sought, William Caillet, leading on the jennet of Adela de Mauvinet. It was in vain that the poor girl attempted to pull in her horse; for Caillet had contrived to grasp the bridle in such a manner that she had no longer any power over the animal; and he continued galloping on, without paying the slightest attention either to her remonstrances or to her cries for help.

The instant Larchenay beheld such a scene, he darted forward and attempted to stop the horse of Caillet. Nor was he altogether unsuccessful; for, seizing the bridle, he checked the animal for a moment. But, without uttering a word, Caillet struck him a blow on the head with a heavy mace which hung at the saddle-bow, and laid the poor man senseless on the ground.

The villain then spurred on at full speed as before, making no reply to the entreaties and tears of the lady, and indeed not seeming to hear her, till at length, finding herself carried farther from assistance, Adela exclaimed—

“If you do not instantly stop, you will force me to spring from the horse.”

Caillet merely looked round, replying, “If you do, you will kill yourself. You had better submit quietly to what cannot be avoided. I tell you,” he continued in a sharper tone, seeing her resolutely disengage herself from the saddle and trappings of the horse for the purpose of casting herself off—“I tell you, if you do, you will kill yourself.”

But even while he spoke he relaxed in a degree the horses' speed, and Adela, seizing the opportunity, after hesitating in terror for a single instant, summoned all her courage and sprang from her jennet to the ground.

She had, when a child, been taught to practise such things in sport, and she had often done it with ease and safety; but the case was very different now: she was cast violently forward and fell; nor can there be a doubt that she would have sustained severe injury had not the path been covered with long forest grass.

Caillet reined up the horses, violently, and springing to

the ground bent over her with a look of alarm and grief. "You have killed yourself!" he exclaimed; "rash girl! you have killed yourself rather than fly with one who loves you to madness."

"Leave me!" said Adela, "leave me; if you are sorry for what you have done, leave me, and provide for your own safety. Some one will be here soon and I shall have help. Leave me, then; leave me, for I am resolved to go no farther; so that, if you are wise, you will now think only of yourself."

"No, lady, no!" exclaimed the villain. "I have not done all this to be now disappointed. You are not so much hurt, I see, and you shall go on with me if we both die before to-morrow."

"Never!" replied Adela, firmly; "never, while I have power to resist!" Caillet answered merely by a laugh, and raising her like a feather from the ground in his powerful arms, he placed her once more upon her horse, in spite of her screams and tears, strapped her tightly to the saddle with one of the stirrup-leathers of his own charger, and then remounting, proceeded at the same furious pace as before.

Adela clasped her hands in despair. She could no longer hope to escape; she saw that if she now attempted to cast herself down, certain death would be the consequence; for, dragged along by the band which fastened her to the saddle, she must evidently perish in the most horrible manner. And yet she asked herself whether it would not be better so to perish than to remain in the power of one so hateful to her in every respect; one from whom she could expect neither mercy nor consideration; who had incurred by the very act he had that night committed the inevitable punishment of death if taken, and who had consequently nothing else to fear, let his acts be what they would. She asked herself whether it would not be better to die at once, horrible as the mode might be, than to continue in his hands and at his mercy. She felt that it would be so, but yet her heart failed her; imagination painted all she would have to suffer: the lingering agony of being dragged along upon the ground till life was extinguished; the probable chance, that, maimed and injured, she might still remain in his power without absolute death bringing her relief; and at the same time hope, persevering hope, yet whispered that some help might yet come; that her father, or the captal, or Albert Denyn, might learn her fate in time to save her from Caillet's hands; and thus for many minutes, with agony of mind inconceivable, she struggled between terror and strong resolution.

Her fall too had hurt her, though not severely: she had suffered much fatigue as well as apprehension during the day; and at length, as the last ray of twilight went out and left her in utter darkness, in the midst of the deep wood and in the power of a man whom she detested, strength failed as well as courage; her head grew giddy, and exclaiming, "Stop, stop! I shall faint, I shall die!" she fell forward upon her horse's neck.

When Adela's recollection returned, she found herself still in the wood, but seated on the ground at the foot of an old decayed beech-tree, with none but William Caillet near her. A large fire, however, was blazing before her; branches of the trees, thickly piled up with leaves, were under her head; and various minute circumstances showed, not only that some care had been taken to recal her to consciousness and to provide for her comfort, but that apparently a considerable period of time must have elapsed since the moment at which memory and sensation had left her.

As she opened her eyes she gazed around with fresh terror and dismay; but no consolation, no hope, was afforded by any of the objects on which the poor girl's glance fell. Caillet was standing before her, gazing upon her; but the moment that he saw she had fully recovered from the fit of fainting into which she had fallen, it seemed as if some demon, which had rested for a time under the command of a better power, roused itself again to triumph in her misery and distress; and his usual sneering curl came upon his lip as he said, "You are well now, lady, and no doubt you will soon get reconciled to your fate, though it may seem a hard one to you at present."

Adela for a moment covered her eyes with her hands, and strove to recal those powers of thought which for some time had been utterly extinct, and were still feeble and wavering. "My fate!" said she wildly, and speaking more to herself than to him; "what fate?"

"To be mine," replied Caillet, watching every look and gesture of his victim. "Ay, lady, to be mine! Yes!" he continued, seeing an involuntary shudder come over her as he spoke; "yes, to be mine—mine, whom you have treated with contumely and contempt because I dared to love you and if not to avow, to let you see that love—mine, whom you trod upon, at whom you looked indignation and scorn, while on the weak boy, who neither dared to speak nor show his love, you smiled continually, encouraging him in a passion which you would have scoffed at as soon as it was displayed. Ay,

you may tremble, lady ; but I tell you you are mine ! No help can reach you here. Mine, and on mine own terms !”

He paused a moment, gazing full upon her by the firelight, as she sat with her hands covering her eyes and the tears streaming rapidly down her cheeks ; but at length he added in a softer tone, “ Listen to me ! Moderate your pride ; cast away the evil spirit of your class ; and perhaps you may have some comfort.”

“ What ? what ? Oh, what ?” exclaimed Adela, eagerly. “ I have no pride ! William Caillet, you have no right to say I have any pride.”

“ Well, then, listen to me,” he repeated, assuming a kindly tone and an air of tenderness, which, to say the truth, sat not ill upon his fine features. “ Listen to me, Adela ; for between you and me—and ere a few short months be over, between lord and serf through the whole land—the terms of master and dependant must be at an end. Listen to me, and I will tell you how you may save yourself much pain, and save me from a harsh determination, which I seek not to display unless I am driven to it.”

As he spoke he drew nearer to her, and seated himself beside her at the foot of the beech-tree ; but Adela started up with a look of horror which she could not suppress, and drew far back from him, gazing at him with terror and apprehension, such as the bird may be supposed to feel when it finds the fatal eyes of the serpent fixed upon it.

A bitter frown came upon the face of Caillet as she did so, and he too rose, saying, “ Am I so hateful to you, lady ? Then I must use another tone. Down by my side, I say ! You are the serf here, and I am lord. Do not think that I have risked death and torture, and cast behind me every ordinary hope of man, to be now mocked by a weak girl. Down by my side, I say ! To-morrow the idle rights of the altar shall unite us for ever ; for I would fain see whether, in case of misfortune, the Lord of Mauvinet will slay his daughter’s husband. Ay, to-morrow you shall be my wife ; but ere then you shall humbly thank me for granting you that name.”

Adela, while he spoke, had gazed upon him with a look of horror and apprehension which she could not repress, though she hardly understood the meaning of his words ; but when, as the villain ended, he made a movement towards her as if to seize her by the arm, she uttered a loud scream and darted away down the forest road, the profound darkness, which at any other time might have terrified her, now seeming a refuge from her brutal pursuer.

Ere she had taken ten steps, however, and while the light of the fire still shone, upon her path, a living being, but whether man or beast she did not at first clearly see, came out rapidly, but quietly, from amongst the trees on her left hand, and stood in the way between her and Caillet.

The villain for a moment recoiled, so strange was the sight presented to him by the red glare of the fire. At first he too doubted whether it was a human creature that he saw; and had his been an ordinary mind, or had his education been that of a common peasant, he might have supposed that some of the numerous evil spirits with which the fanciful superstitions of the times peopled the forests and the mountains now stood before him. He soon perceived, however, that though nearly covered by the long and tangled beard and the grey locks which hung in wild profusion over the brow, it was the face of a man which glared fiercely upon him. The form indeed was scarcely human, the height not more than four feet, the breadth great, and the arms exceedingly long and powerful; but the whole frame was contorted, and more resembling the knotted trunk of some old hawthorn-tree than the body of a man. He was covered, too, with untanned goatskins for clothing, which added to the wild savageness of his appearance.

Caillet paused only sufficient time to see that it was one of his own species, and then sprang forward again to grasp the poor girl, who fled half fainting from his pursuit; but the strange being which had crossed his path stretched out its long arms from side to side of the road, exclaiming in a deep loud voice, "Stop!" and as Caillet, fearful of losing the object for which he had played so rash and daring a game, rushed on, his knees were suddenly twined round by the sinewy limbs of his new opponent; and feeling as if he had been clasped tight in bands of iron, he reeled and fell headlong as he endeavoured to disentangle himself.

His adversary relaxed his grasp as they fell together, and both started up at the same moment; but still the wild-looking creature which had interrupted Caillet in his course was between him and the way she had taken; and, brandishing a huge axe which had hung at his back, he barred the road, saying, "I have let thee stay for the last hour by my fire, and stable thy horse under my trees, and use my fountain of pure water; and now, brute beast, not knowing that there was any one that watched thee but the high, unseen eye of God, thou wouldst offer violence to innocence even in my presence. Get thee gone lest I slay thee! Betake thee to thy horse's

back and flee, or I will dash thy brains but where thou standest."

Caillet made no reply, but taking a single step back, laid his hand upon the hilt of the sword which he wore, and drawing it from the scabbard, aimed a sudden and violent blow at the head of his adversary. It was instantly met by the staff of the axe, however, and the edge cut deep into the wood; but ere it could be returned, sounds met the ears of both the combatants, which for a moment suspended the encounter.

CHAPTER IX.

ADELA DE MAUVINET paused not to ascertain who or what it was that interposed between her and her abhorred pursuer. She saw that he was delayed, and even a moment gained seemed to her a blessing so great as to give fresh strength to her weak and fainting steps. She flew on, then, down the road, till the darkness caused her to stop for an instant, and ask herself whether she might not plunge into the thick wood which stretched out on either hand, and like the timid hare or the wild deer conceal herself amidst the underwood, till the return of light enabled her to find some place of refuge or brought her some help.

As she thus paused for a moment she heard the blast of a distant horn, and her heart beat almost to bursting with renewed hope. She thought at first only of rushing on, but the sound was far off. the person who blew the blast might take some other path; Caillet was sure to overtake her ere the other could come near; and she turned hastily towards the thicket. For another instant she lingered again, holding the stem of one of the trees for support. The horn was not heard, but she caught what seemed fierce words from the other side, and at all events it was clear that her enemy's pursuit was stopped for the moment.

The horn sounded again in a moment or two, but it was still very distant; and Adela was drawing gently back from the road amongst the brushwood when there came a flash along the path, as if some one bearing a torch were approaching from the side nearest to Mauvinet. Her first impulse was to spring forward and meet it, and when she heard horses' feet too coming rapidly, hope rose high; but then she thought of the attack upon her father's band, and her heart fell again. It might be the adventurers; it might be some base confederate of Caillet; and she drew farther back amongst the trees, but not so completely as to deprive herself of a view of the road.

Eagerly did she gaze towards it for the next few minutes,

the light increasing quickly and the horses' feet sounding near and more near. At length it came in sight; and Adela, uttering a cry of joy, darted forward, exclaiming, "Oh, Albert, Albert! you have come to save me!"

Albert Denyn sprang to the ground and cast his left arm round her, while his right hand grasped the torch, and with eager eyes and a look mingling fierce indignation with anxiety and alarm, he asked hurriedly, "Has he injured you, dear lady? Where is he? Where is he? No hand but mine must punish him." Tell me quickly, Lady Adela, for your father and the captal follow fast behind, and I would fain be the first."

"Oh, leave him to them, Albert!" exclaimed Adela. "He is strong; he is well armed; he fights for existence. Some one has stopped him, or he would have pursued me. Leave him, Albert; leave him, at least till some others come to aid you."

"Hark!" cried the youth, not heeding her entreaties; "I hear voices on there before. Dear lady, you are safe! My lord the count will be with you in a moment. Let me—let me, I beseech you, give him his due reward;" and without waiting to hear more, he pressed his lips respectfully upon Adela's hand and burst away.

Darting forward like lightning, Albert soon heard the clang of steel and caught a glimpse of the fire from beside which Adela had fled. It shone faintly through the trees indeed, for the road had taken a slight turn; but it was sufficiently bright to show him two dark forms, engaged in what seemed a struggle for life and death, the light flashing occasionally upon the blade of the sword or the head of the axe, as they whirled round and round the heads of the combatants.

With his whole soul burning with anger and indignation, the youth rushed on, exclaiming, "Leave him to me!—leave him to me! Villain! traitor! is this all your boasted zeal? Turn upon me, Caillet! turn upon me! Leave him to me, old man; I will punish him!"

"Ha! ha!" cried the strange being who had interrupted Caillet in his pursuit of Adela; "art thou come hither to deal with him? So be it then; deal with him thou shalt."

Almost at the same moment, Caillet exclaimed with flashing eyes, "Now, then, meddling young fool! you shall have your reward, though doubtless you are not here alone. You have not courage to be aught but the lacquey of some pitiful lord, or to wait upon a lady's serving-woman. Serf by choice as well as by fate! come on, I say! I may perhaps have time

yet to give you a chance, like the fools you so proudly serve, of dying for a lady-love; if not, at least I can die myself, and I well deserve it for having suffered either pity or remorse, or any other such idle dream, to make me miss my opportunity. Come on, though I well know you have cowardly odds enough against me."

"I trust to have time to slay you before they can interfere," replied Albert, whose sword was already crossed with that of Caillet; "and all that I wish is, that I were but sure of half-an-hour with you alone here in the wood. Back, back, traitor, into the clearer light! this darkness suits your spirit much better than mine."

Thus saying, he pressed forward upon his adversary with such fierceness and activity that Caillet was compelled to retreat towards the centre of the little opening in the wood, while the wild spectator of their combat, who had stood by for a moment, listening and leaning on his axe, now rushed forward to the fire of withered branches and dry fern and gorse, and tossing them high in the air, made a pyramid of flame blaze up and cast a bright glare of red light over the whole scene around.

Nor, to say the truth, was Caillet displeased to be thus enabled to see more clearly in his strife with Albert Denyn. He was much too clear-sighted and shrewd not to have perceived the youth's natural genius for military exercises, and marked the great progress which he had made with very little instruction; and indeed, though from his greater age and experience he had always affected a superiority over Albert, and pretended to regard him as a mere youth, yet in reality he had feared him rather than despised him; had been jealous of him rather than looked down upon him. He was thus well aware that it was with no common antagonist he had to do; and though he vainly fancied himself as superior in skill as he was in age, and strength, he knew that a false step or an ill-aimed blow might well turn the chances against himself.

Caillet retreated, then, more willingly than Albert thought, watching the eager thrusts and blows of his assailant, and ready at any moment to take advantage of a mistake. The youth rushed on fiercely, and perhaps somewhat rashly; and a lunge that passed close to his breast, and wounded him slightly in the shoulder, showed him that he must be more cautious in his dealings with his adversary. In the open light, however, he took more care; and a scornful smile of satisfaction which came upon Caillet's face, when he saw the blood rapidly flowing from his companion's arm, was next moment

changed into a scowl of malignant hatred, as an unexpected blow from Albert's sword covered his whole face with blood and made him stagger as he stood. Nevertheless, he parried a second blow, and only became the more wary from the injury he had received, his first fear being lest the flowing of the gore, which dimmed his sight, might prevent him from taking that revenge for which his soul thirsted. For a moment or two he kept entirely on the defensive, retreating slowly round the fire; and Albert became possessed with the idea that he was endeavouring to reach his horse, which stood hard by, cropping the grass at the side of Adela's jennet.

Determined that he should not escape, the youth sprang with one bound into the midst of the burning branches, and then by another placed himself between his enemy and the horses; the intense heat, however, and the suffocating smoke of the fire made his head giddy and his sight dim; and Caillet, who now attacked him with redoubled fury, might perhaps have ultimately gained the advantage, had not the galloping of cavalry sounded close at hand and drawn the villein's attention to the other side. Albert took immediate advantage of the opportunity, sprang fiercely upon him, closed with him in a moment, and shortening his sword, was about to drive it into his heart, when his arm was suddenly seized, and a loud voice exclaimed—

"Come, come, my young tiger! On my soul, you have well-nigh killed your game; but I must stop you, however; for if I mistake not this is the youth who gave us tidings of such goodly booty."

"And this is he," exclaimed Caillet, now freed from Albert's grasp—"and this is he who defeated your plan, and prevented you from reaping the harvest which I had promised you. Leave him to me, leave him to me, I beseech you: I as well as you have an account to settle with him."

"By heaven!" cried the person who had before spoken, and in whom Albert instantly recognised one of the band of adventurers that he had found contending with the Lord Mauvinet and his little party—"By heaven! if we had left him to you, my man, for another minute, he would soon have settled that account you talk of: at least so it seemed just now. But we have no time to wait for idle talk: you must both come with us; for it seems we owe you both something, and that score had better be cleared."

Too many persons stood round at the moment, and those persons too well armed, for Albert Denyn to offer any opposition. He had about him, it is true, all the eager spirit of

youth; he had in his heart that daring courage which utter contempt of danger, inexperience, a hardy education, and a mind neither softened by luxury nor attached to the world by high fortunes and bright hopes, can alone give: he had, in short, courage approaching to rashness. But yet there are some circumstances in which successful resistance is so evidently impossible that even rashness itself dare not attempt it; and in the present instance Albert did not even dream of opposing the force which now surrounded him. All his thoughts were how best to act in the situation in which he was placed, not for his own security, but for the safety of Adela. He knew, or at least he believed, that the party of the Lord of Mauvinet and the Captal de Buch could be at no great distance, and there was every probability of their coming to his relief if he could delay the adventurers for a few moments; but he hesitated even to make the attempt, lest by any means the safety of Adela might be compromised, and she might likewise fall into the hands of the free companions before those who had quitted Mauvinet to deliver her could come up.

Ere he had time to arrange any plan, Caillet, as if he had divined what was passing in his enemy's mind and sought to frustrate his design, turned to the leader of the troop, exclaiming, "I will go with you willingly enough, noble sir; but I beseech you seek for the lady who was with me, and who must even now be at no great distance along that road. You know our contract was, that she was to be my share of the day's booty."

"It was your business to keep her when you had got her, then," replied the adventurer harshly: "we have no time to seek this errant lady now."

"You had better not dally," cried Albert Denyn eagerly. "the count and the Captal de Buch, with all their men, must be here ere many minutes are over. Some went by the one path and some by the other, while I cut across through the brushwood by the chapel till I reached the road again; but I cannot have gained ten minutes upon the rest. Hark! there is a horn: those are the captal's men coming up on the right."

"By the bones of the saints, then!" exclaimed the captain of the adventurers, "we have but little time to spare. Quick! to your horses! Come, come, young man!" he continued, speaking to Albert: "if you try to delay we will drive you on with a lance. Mount your horse! quick!"

"That is not my horse," said Albert Denyn: "that is the lady's."

"Here is another in the lane," said a second man.

"Bring it, Hugo; bring it up!" cried the first: and in a moment Albert's horse, which had followed him slowly from the spot where he had left Adela, was led forward, and he was forced to mount in order to proceed with his captors. Placed between two of the free companions, his sword having been taken from him, and no means either of resistance or defence being left to him, Albert Denyn reluctantly suffered himself to be hurried along at a quick pace, hearing from time to time the distant horns of the friendly troop from which he had been separated, but with the mortification of finding that the sounds grew fainter as he was thus borne on against his will to a distance from all those for whom he felt any attachment. He had but one consolation: that Adela at least had escaped; that she was delivered from the hands of Caillet, and had not fallen into those of the adventurers.

This was certainly no slight comfort; but still, with the restless anxiety of all those who love well, imagination suggested a thousand dangers and created a thousand fears in regard to the safety of the fair Lady of Mauvinet. He fancied that the count and the captain might not find her; that she might be forced to stray in terror and solitude through that dark wood during the live-long night, and perhaps perish ere the morning from hunger, cold, and apprehension. For his own fate he cared little: he feared not that any evil would befall him, although he knew that the free companions had sometimes shown great cruelty to prisoners who could not or would not pay a large ransom; but his was not a heart at all prone to apprehension; and he rode on, endeavouring to solace himself with youth's bright hope that "all will go well," which lights us still, though the clouds loom above and the tempest beats around us.

The march of the adventurers lasted the whole night. At first they proceeded very rapidly, but gradually assumed a slower pace, as they imagined pursuit to be left far behind them. During the earlier part of the journey Albert paid but little attention to anything that was said or done by those around him; and indeed but little conversation took place among the men themselves. As their progress became slow, however, they began to speak over the events of the day, first in broken sentences and detached words, and then in more lengthened discussions, to which Albert, somewhat recovered from the first tumultuous feelings that his captivity had occasioned, turned an attentive ear, the subject being one in which, as may well be supposed, he took some interest.

It would be tedious both to the reader and the writer to detail the whole conversation of the two men who guarded Albert, and in which those who rode immediately before and behind also joined occasionally. The youth gathered, however, that although they had been disappointed in a part of their booty, they had yet contrived to strip the good farmers of Mauvinet of a very considerable sum; but the loss of men they had sustained also appeared to have been severe; and they spoke in terms of so much anger regarding the death of the leader who had first broken through the little band of the count and the capital, that Albert began to apprehend his own life might not be in safety if it were discovered that his was the hand which slew him.

"We shall never get his like," exclaimed one of the men, "if we seek far and wide."

"I wish," cried another, "that I could have struck only one blow at the fellow when he hit him on the head with the axe: he should have kept him company on the road, wherever he is gone."

"It is a bad day's work," rejoined the first. "To lose such a captain as that may well make us curse the hand that did it."

"I got hold of him by the collar at one time," said a third speaker, "and in another moment would have cleft his skull, but just then fresh people came up from the castle, and I was obliged to let go my grasp: I would have given my right hand for five minutes more; but the time may come when we shall meet with the lad again. I wish Sir Robert would go and storm the castle some day."

"That would take more men than we have got to spare," replied the first who had spoken; "but I trust we shall lay hands upon the youth some time or another, as you say, and then woe be to him if he come in my way!"

"Or in mine," answered the other; "but see! there is the daylight coming in. We cannot have much farther to march."

What he said was true. The soft morning light was beginning to appear in the east, and the objects around became more distinctly visible, everything looking calm, and sweet, and peaceful, and the whole scene seeming to reproach man for the folly and the wickedness of his unceasing strife and vain contentions.

The adventurers had quitted the wood for some time when the day dawned, and the landscape presented merely a quiet country scene, with fields spread out in various states of

cultivation, and some scattered cottages nestled in various sheltered nooks of that undulating tract of country which lies upon the frontiers of Maine and Touraine. On a distant eminence, however, was seen a tall tower rising up and commanding the whole country round about, and towards it the band of free companions now took their way, passing through the midst of several of the fields, without the slightest consideration for some of the late crops which were still upon the ground.

As the light grew brighter and brighter every moment, Albert could perceive one of the men who rode beside him turn round several times with a frowning brow to gaze upon his countenance, and at length, without saying anything, but merely making a sign for those who were behind to ride forward and fill up his place, the adventure galloped on towards the end of the line and spoke for several moments with the leader. He then came back again and resumed his place, without making any comment; and a few moments after, the whole body wound slowly up a steep ascent towards the gates of the castle.

To whom it originally belonged Albert knew not, but it was now evidently in the hands of a large body of plunderers, of whom the troop that carried him along with them formed a part. As they approached, a number of the soldiery were seen sitting round the barbican, which was beyond the moat, cleaning their arms or playing at various games of chance; and little discipline or regularity of any kind seemed to be maintained amongst them. Even the band which had captured Albert dispersed without order as they came up. Some, stopping to speak with their comrades, remained behind; some, dismounting, led their horses through the gates; some staid in a group to talk together over the adventures of the past night. The men who surrounded him, however, and those who accompanied Caillet in the rear, rode on into the outer court without losing sight of him for a moment; and the instant he had passed through the long dark archway, Albert heard an order given for the gates to be closed behind.

CHAPTER X.

To retrace one's steps is always an unpleasant task. Whether the path that we have followed be one of joy or of sorrow, whether the bright beams of hope or the dark clouds of despondency have hung upon our way, it is still an unpleasant thing to tread back our course and resume our advance again from a spot which we left long before. If sorrow have been our companion in the scenes which we are called upon to revisit, though there is an accidental sweetness that mingles with the bitterness of recollected woes, yet darkness must ever fill the principal part of the picture, and the light be faint and sad. Even if we have known bright joys, and that glorious happiness which visits the mortal being but once or twice in life, still we find something unpleasant in retreading our steps: the scenes are less fair than memory painted them; the light that gave them lustre is gone out, and the contrast generally renders that which might otherwise have been pleasing sad, and very often more gloomy than if there had never been aught glittering and joyful in the things around us.

We must nevertheless turn back, in the course of this history's chronology, to the moment at which we left the Count de Mauvinet, the Captal de Buch, and Albert Denyn, returning towards the château, after having dispersed the body of adventurers and pursued them as far as was judged necessary. The count and the captal rode on, without anything like apprehension or alarm, although both were grave; for the latter was the reverse of sanguinary by nature, and loved not to see unnecessary bloodshed, and the count on his part had a personal interest of a painful kind in the events of the day. Many of his peasantry, upon whose superiority he prided himself as much as upon the protection and happiness which they enjoyed upon his domains, had been slaughtered or wounded before his eyes, when they came to offer an honourable tribute of gratitude for the kindness which he had ever displayed towards them. Thus neither of the two noblemen could feel gay, or even cheerful, although in the first excitement of success they might jest at the discomfiture of

the adventurers. But still, neither of them experienced the least apprehension in regard to Adela, after the explanation which Albert Denyn had given.

Albert himself was not so well satisfied; why or wherefore he knew not. There were fears in his mind, vague, indefinite, perhaps unreasonable; and he looked eagerly first towards the château and then towards the hill, though too little light remained in the sky for him to see distinctly any object at a distance. When they had reached a small mound, however, about a hundred yards from the causeway which led across the moat, they were met by one of the peasants running at full speed, and exclaiming, "Oh, my lord! my lord! the Lady Adela!"

"What of her?" exclaimed the count, apprehensions for his daughter immediately taking possession of his bosom; "what of your lady? Speak, man, speak!"

"He has carried her off," cried the man, out of breath. "Instead of turning towards the castle, he has forced her away into the wood."

"Whom do you mean by he?" demanded the captal: "what can we understand by he?"

"I mean William Caillet," replied the man; "I saw him do it myself, and Larchenay has followed him into the wood. Peter John has gone thither also; but I fear they will not overtake him, for they have no horses."

"Why did you leave her, Albert?" exclaimed the Count de Mauvinet; "why did you leave her?"

"She commanded me to do so, my lord," answered Albert. "she thought you were in danger. Caillet, too—the traitor!"

"Which way did they take?" cried the count; "which way did they take?"

The man explained as well as he could; but in the dim light he had not seen the proceedings of Caillet distinctly, and more of the peasantry coming up only embarrassed the statements of the first. The count and his companions paused but for a moment to hear; and then, exclaiming, "On into the wood! my lord captal, I will not ask you if you will seek my child with me—I know you will"—the Lord of Mauvinet spurred forward his horse towards the side of the wood, and entered by the first path he could find.

It so happened that his knowledge of the country, and a rapid calculation of the road which a person engaged in such a base enterprise was likely to take, led him at once directly upon the track of Caillet; and the count for some minutes pursued it fiercely, galloping at full speed and without draw

ing rein. The shadows of the night, however, were creeping over the scene apace; and at length the horse of the captal, which, though somewhat weary with a long day's journey, was still full of fire, shied at an object by the side of the road, and the moment after the count himself pulled in his rein, exclaiming, "There is a dead man!"

"No, not yet dead," cried a faint voice, "though well-nigh dead, my lord; for that villain Caillet has fractured my skull, I am sure."

"What, Larchenay!" exclaimed the count: "is that you, my poor fellow? Where is the villain? Was your lady with him?"

"Ay, that she was, my lord," answered the farmer in a faint voice. "He was leading the horse along by the bridle, whether she would or not, and I am sure there was magic in the thing; for though she screamed so loudly and it was her own favourite jennet, the beast went on without heeding her cries, at the slightest touch of that traitor's hand."

"Which way did he take?" demanded the Lord of Mauvinet.

"Oh! straight on, straight on," replied the farmer: "he staid for no offe, but dealt me that one blow on the head and galloped forward at full speed."

"Some one see to him!" exclaimed the count, pointing to the poor farmer: "let him be carried to the castle and have all care and tendance. Let us on now ourselves; we must soon come up with the villain; his horse can never match ours."

"Alas! my lord," said Larchenay, "he has dared to take out one of your own noblest chargers."

"Accursed villain!" cried the count; "then we must but make the more speed. Set to your spurs, my lord captal; this is a sad day's work indeed."

They galloped on for some way without check or pause, no one uttering a word, but all listening eagerly, although the noise of their own horses' feet must have drowned every lighter sound. At length, however, Albert Denyn spoke.

"Hark! my lord, Lark!" he said; "surely there is a horse's feet before us."

The Lord of Mauvinet paused, exclaiming, "Halt!" and the whole line of those who were following instantly drew in their reins. At first no other sound was heard; but the next instant the captal exclaimed, "You are right, young man, you are right; there is some one flying along the road;" and in a moment after, the noise of a horse's feet, as they passed

over some more stony part of the road, were distinctly heard beating the ground with furious rapidity.

No more words were spoken; no thought animated the bosom of any one but that of overtaking the villain who had committed so terrible an outrage. But still the sounds went on before them and led them for some way in the pursuit, till at length through the dim light they suddenly caught a sight of the charger, which the moment after stood quite still; and at the same instant the rider put his hand to his head and fell forward upon the neck of his horse. The next minute the Count de Mauvinet was by his side; but instead of William Caillet, the figure was that of one of the heavy-armed adventurers whom they had so lately overthrown; and almost at the same time that the count laid his hand upon the bridle, so as to make the horse suddenly retreat a step, the man fell headlong to the ground, dead from the wounds he had received in the late combat. Some of the men sprang to the ground and opened his casque, but life was quite extinct.

"We have been mistaken," cried the Lord of Mauvinet, "and without torches our pursuit will be vain. Can you tell, Albert, where we can find either torches or flambeaux to guide us on our way onward?"

"There is St. Mary's Chapel not far off," said Albert rapidly; "doubtless the priest there has both."

"Thither, thither!" cried the Lord of Mauvinet; "let us go thither;" and turning his horse's bridle, he led the way to a small chapel in the wood, by the side of which stood the house of a poor priest, who, though in truth he had nothing within his dwelling to justify him in thinking that any one would plunder his abode, would yet scarcely on any persuasion open the gates to the Lord of Mauvinet and his party, though the count threatened to drive in the door if he hesitated any longer. When the good man was at length convinced that it was indeed his chief patron who was there waiting for torches, he would fain have made a thousand excuses for the delay, and in the very attempt wasted so much time that Albert Denyn, springing to the ground, entered without further ceremony, and soon returned, bearing in his hand that which was wanted, much to the satisfaction of his lord.

Leaving the poor priest to close his house again at leisure, the party proceeded once more upon the search, the hearts of all sinking with apprehension at the long delays which had intervened. To describe the feelings of Albert Denyn would be impossible; and though, if any one could have seen his

countenance, those feelings would have been found plainly written there, yet, as he had not uttered during the whole ride one word but those we have mentioned, no one present had any idea of what was going on in his breast, unless indeed it was the Captal de Buch, who might entertain some suspicion that the heart of his young retainer was less at ease than some of those present suspected.

At length on reaching a spot where several ways divided, the whole party were obliged to make a pause to settle their farther course, lest, while they were proceeding on one path, Caillet should escape by another. All the roads, it appeared, joined again at the distance of a few miles; and while the captal took one, the Count de Mauvinet chose another, and despatched three or four of the men by a small path which led between the two. There was still, however, an extensive tract where the wood had been cut down to afford firing for the ensuing winter; and lest the villain Caillet should evade their pursuit by crossing that, Albert besought his lord's permission to gallop forward by the only open path he knew of across the brushwood, and to rejoin them somewhat farther on.

He took one of the torches with him; and as he turned to go, the Captal de Buch said, gazing on him with a peculiar sort of smile, "We will sound our horns, young man, in case you should need help, though I do not think you are one to call for it without great necessity."

"I trust not, my lord," replied Albert; "and in this case I think I could well deal with that base villain alone."

"And doubtless would willingly do so," said the captal.

"Most willingly, my lord," replied Albert. "Pray God send me that good fortune!" And thus saying he rode away. His horse, which had not been out with the party in the morning, was of course fresher than any of the others; and as we have shown, what between the shortness of the path and the pace at which he went, he gained a considerable way upon his companions. In the mean time the count and the Captal de Buch rode on, pushing their chargers to their utmost speed, each party guided by persons who knew the way well, and each keeping nearly on a line with the other, though that of the captal was perhaps a little in advance.

The great English commander, however, had scarcely reached the spot where the brief combat had taken place between Albert Denyn and Caillet, when the count himself galloped up, exclaiming, "What have we here? A fire?—and, as I live, my poor Adela's jennet! Oh, my lord captal! this is very terrible!"

The captal gazed sternly round him for a moment in silence, and then sprang to the ground, saying, "Here is something more! That good youth has overtaken him, my lord: here is the torch he carried, and the ground is covered with blood. See, see! Here amongst the grass! There has been a sharp strife! But what have we more? Here are the footmarks of many horses. A whole band has been here not long ago—some thirty or forty, it would seem. Take my word for it, my lord, this is a deeper scheme than we have fancied: this villain is in league with the men who attacked us to-night, and it is they who have got your daughter for the sake of a ransom. Albert, poor boy! has met with them, and has, doubtless, fared ill. They have not killed him, however, or we should find his body; but he must be badly wounded if all this blood be his."

When he had done speaking, the captal turned to the count, and standing by the side of that nobleman's horse, laid his hand upon the animal's neck, gazing up into his friend's face, which was full of the anguish that a parent alone can feel in such circumstances. The captal was moved by the depth of sorrow which he beheld. "Take comfort," said he, "my good lord; take comfort!"

"Oh, my lord captal!" replied the count, "there can be no comfort for a father while he knows not his child's fate! But you cannot feel what I feel, nor can I expect or ask you to follow out this enterprise as I must follow it. I can know no rest till I have delivered my child."

"Am I a knight, a noble, and your friend?" demanded the captal, grasping his hand, "and shall I quit you in such an hour as this? Nay, nay, my lord; hear me but one word," and unsheathing his sword, he held up the cross of the hilt before his eyes, saying, "So help me God and our Lady in my utmost need, as I do never sheath this sword, or lay my head upon a pillow, or eat aught but bread, till I have delivered the Lady Adela, or taken vengeance of those that have done her wrong! Nor will I forget the man who has injured that poor boy Albert. I have not been so kind to him in my thoughts as I might have been; but I will do him justice, if God give me grace, hereafter. And now, my lord, let us on upon our way as far as our tired horses will carry us. These men themselves cannot outrun us far, for their beasts were evidently hard pressed when last we saw them."

"We shall find a village some three miles on," said the Lord of Mauvinet in a sad tone: "perhaps we may there obtain some intelligence."

CHAPTER XI.

ALBERT DENYN gazed round the small court of the castle, when the gate was shut behind him, with feelings not a little painful. His heart was one which might find joy and satisfaction in honourable danger and noble strife; which, even had death been imminent—nay, certain—would not have hesitated for an instant to plunge into a struggle that had any high and generous object. But the aspect of the battle-field, with its eager endeavour and inspiriting emulation—with the bray of trumpets and the clang of arms—is very, very different from the silent grey walls of the prison, with the prospect of long captivity and perhaps unrecorded death. Such were the things which Albert Denyn had now to contemplate as he gazed around him in the castle of the adventurers; for the menacing looks which he had seen and the words which he had heard were not to be mistaken.

The court was nearly empty of all human beings but those who brought him thither; and there seemed something solemn and sad even in the sunshine, as it rested on the tall wall of the principal keep of the castle, with none but a few small, irregular windows breaking the flat monotony of the surface. The large doors of the keep were half open, and from within, but seeming as if they echoed through many vacant halls, came the sounds of laughter and merriment, ringing harshly upon the ear of the young captive.

Both he and Caillet were now told to dismount; and while they stood face to face at some little distance, with no very pleasant sensations in their hearts towards each other, five or six of the adventurers stood around watching them; and two, who seemed to be principal personages in the band, passed through the doors into the keep and disappeared for some time.

While they were gone, Caillet fixed his eyes upon Albert sternly and steadfastly, but met a look not less fixed and determined than his own. Neither spoke, however; and at

length one of the adventurers who had left them reappeared at the door of the hall, making a sign to the others, who immediately bade their two prisoners to go on, and led them forward to the keep. Albert thought that he could perceive a gleam of triumph come over Caillet's countenance as he passed, but that look left it in a moment, and his features relapsed into their usual expression of cold scorn.

Mounting the steps, they were hurried through the great hall of the keep, which was quite empty, and across another vacant room beyond to a small dark chamber, which had once been painted with various gay devices, but which was already blackened over with the smoke of many years. In the large chimney blazed an immense fire of wood; and the white wreaths of smoke, still escaping, curled round the rafters above, and made the eyes wink with the pungent vapour. In the midst stood a table loaded with viands and covered with large leathern bottles of wine, while round the upper end sat four strong, middle-aged men, with harsh and weather-beaten countenances, on most of which were to be traced manifold scars. The one at the head of the board, who seemed to be superior to the rest, had a frank and somewhat gay look, with large, square, heavy features, and bushy overhanging eyebrows. He and the rest gazed upon Albert and Caillet for a moment without speaking, while two or three of the adventurers who had brought them thither seated themselves at the table with the others, and the rest, who appeared of an inferior grade, stood round the prisoners.

Albert, on his part, wisely resolving to keep silence as far as possible, remained standing before the adventurers with as calm an air as he could assume. Caillet, however, bent his brows, somewhat angrily it seemed, upon the personage at the head of the table, and after pausing for a short time, as if to see whether the other would begin, he spoke himself, saying, "This is not fair or right: I thought I was dealing with men of honour, who would keep their word with me when I kept my word with them."

"You are saucy, my friend," said the leader of the adventurers. "Take a quieter tone here. We are men of honour, and do keep our word with all those who trust us and who show good faith towards us; but it seems that there are suspicions of your not having done so, and it is but fair that we should know whether such be the case or not. I have sad news here: not half the plunder that you promised has been obtained; our people have been attacked unexpectedly, and met with severe loss. You yourself, I am told, were seen

amongst those who led the rescue from the castle, and it is much doubted whether you did or did not betray us into the hands of the enemy."

"He who pretends to doubt is a knave," replied Caillet boldly; "and he who really doubts is a fool. Did I not stipulate for a certain prize, and was I not to take my own means and time for obtaining it? How could I gain possession of her, but by the way I took? It was the meddling boy who stands there that led the rescue from the castle: I had nothing to do with it."

"We will speak of him by-and-by," said the leader: "in the mean time, keep to your own affair. How was it discovered so soon from the castle that they had made the attack?"

"Because," replied Gaillet, "they were half-an-hour later than they promised to be. If they had been to their time, nothing of the kind could have happened, but they were not; and they have no right now to lay upon me the fault of that which was their own doing."

"How is this, Harvè?" said the leader; "how came you to be so late?"

"Why, I will tell you, Griffith," answered the man: "it was Chapelle; who would stay to drink some wine which we found at the miller's. I told him five times to come away, but he would not; and then he was so drunk that we were forced to draw him through the river to get him sober again, as he had to command the second troop, you know."

"In short, then, it was your own fault," replied the commander, "and you have no right to blame others for that which you did yourselves. There is no proof at all that he had anything to do with the rescue, and I see not why you interrupted him or brought him hither."

"It is not of that alone which I complain," said Caillet: "it is, that they have prevented me from punishing yon insolent boy, who was the cause of all the mischief, and by dragging me away have suffered the very prize for which I had risked all to be snatched from my hands for ever."

"As to punishing him," said one of the men, laughing, "he was more in the way to punish you, good youth. When we found you, you were in but a bad taking; and in a few minutes more would certainly have measured your length upon the ground with more than one hole in your throat, if I judge right. Why, he had cut you over the head, had got you by the neck, and had very nearly settled the affair to his own satisfaction, I suppose, before we came up. Was it not so?" he added, addressing Albert Denyn.

But Albert made no reply; and one of the leaders who were sitting at the table burst out into a laugh, exclaiming, "Better say no more on that subject, my hero; and as for the woman, give him a hundred crowns, Griffith, and send him about his business; then he will have no reason to complain. Surely a hundred crowns are above the worth of any woman that ever yet was born. Why, he looks discontented: what would he have? Give it him and send him off, for we must have no saucy grumblers here."

But the other, whom he had called Griffith, and who, as the reader perhaps may know, was afterwards one of the most distinguished amongst the adventurous leaders of the time, treated the claims of Caillet with somewhat more respect, saying—

"I am sorry you have been disappointed, and will willingly do all I can to make up for it. What will you have? what do you wish for?"

Caillet gazed sternly down upon the ground for a moment or two, and then, raising his eyes, replied, with a heavy frown upon his countenance, "For the objects and purposes which with you and through you I have lost, I sacrificed everything on earth. I have no longer an abode, a friend, or aught else that can make existence tolerable; and therefore it is that I demand to be received into your band, to have a new existence given me by yourselves, as through you I have lost that which I myself possessed. You will not find me wanting either in strength or skill, as I am ready to prove with any one or upon any one here present; and of my determination and resolution you may judge by what you know of me already. This, then, I say, is the only compensation that can be made me for that of which the silly interference of the men who brought me hither has deprived me."

The men round the table looked in each other's faces with evident surprise, but that surprise was clearly not pleasurable; and after a moment Griffith answered, "No, no, my good friend; you make a great mistake: it is impossible that you can be received into this band, for manifold strong reasons. First, if you must needs know them, we have none amongst us but gentlemen and soldiers of tried courage and of old repute; secondly, although you seem to think that your coming here and proposing to us a little enterprise, which, if fully successful, might have increased our treasure in no slight degree, is a service deserving high encouragement, yet I have to tell you that that very fact—though we may pay you with a part of the spoil, or suffer you to take the prize you coveted

—far from gaining you admission into our band, would exclude you from amongst us for ever. Know that we hate and despise traitors; that we abominate and condemn those who betray the trust reposed in them; that we have no place amongst us for such people; and though we may use them as men use dirty tools to work great ends, yet we cast them from us as soon as possible, and wash our hands when we have done. The insolence of your demand is forgiven, and we will not treat you ill though you have forgotten yourself. Nay, more—we will make you the compensation proposed. Take him away, Harvè, and give him a hundred crowns; restore to him his horse and his weapons, or if his horse be tired let him have another as good as his own, for he will have to make his escape from this part of the country. Furnish him with a safe conduct, too, that none of our people may hurt him, and let him go in peace. This is all that can be done for you, young man, and more than most men would do; so say no more, if, as I judge by your look, what is hanging upon your lips is insolent, for the Welsh blood in my veins is not cool, and you may chance to set it on fire.”

“You mistake,” replied Caillet: “I am going to say nothing that can give you offence; you are the best judge whom you will admit into your band. Killed already with brave men, you need no more, but you would not have found me wanting. All I could desire further were but one short half-hour with that youth who your comrade here so foolishly fancied had done me some serious hurt.”

“No, no,” cried Griffith; “be wise and take care of yourself. The sooner you are away from this place, the better both for you and us: we love not your presence. As to this youth, we have to deal with him ourselves, and will do so as we think fit, without your help or counsel.”

“You owe to him,” added Caillet, unwilling to leave anything unsaid that could injure the man he hated—“you owe to him whatever evil has befallen your band; for he it was who, watching from one of the windows of the tower, first saw the attack upon the count and then called the whole place to arms.”

• “Leave him to us, leave him to us!” said Griffith impatiently; “we will act towards him as we judge right. Take him away, Harvè; take the fellow away! We have heard too much of his babble already.”

Caillet was accordingly led out of the room; but as he passed he twice turned his eyes fiercely upon Albert Denyn, and ran his hand along his belt as if feeling for some weapon

of offence to smite his adversary with at any risk. As soon as he was gone, the leader of the adventurers turned to Albert, demanding—

“Well, young man, what have you to say?”

“Nothing,” replied Albert calmly.

“That is soon said,” answered the other; “but we may have something more to say to you. They tell me that it was you who slew by the blow of an axe one of our dearest companions and best leaders.”

He paused as if for a reply; and Albert answered, “It is very possible: one of them I certainly did slay, and he looked like a brave man and a valiant captain, so it is doubtless of him you speak.”

“Cool enough!” replied Griffith: “let me see now, young man, if you can give me as calm an answer to what I have next to ask. Can you tell me any reason why, as you slew him, we should not slay you?”

“The best of all reasons,” replied Albert Denyn: “because I have done nothing for which I should be slain. I have done nothing but what any man here would have done in my place. I have served and defended my lord; I have defended his daughter. If I had died upon the field, I should have died doing what was right; and if I am killed now, those who put me to death will neither show knightly courtesy nor the dealing of true soldiers, but will commit a murder like base assassins upon an unarmed man. If there be any man among you who would not have done as I have done, I tell him to his beard that he is a traitor and a felon; and let him come forth and slay me, if I am to be slain, for the trade of a murderer will suit well with his character. But if there be one noble heart and good soldier amongst you, he will defend me.”

“On my soul, that will I!” said one of those who had been sitting at meat when the party which conducted the youth had entered. “Griffith, you see well the lad did but do his duty. Out upon it! If we are to punish a man for fighting well in his captain’s behalf and fairly killing a bold adversary, I will put my head under a monk’s cowl and patter *benedictes* to every one I meet; for I trust—heaven help me!—to kill as good a man as Chapelle every year, if I keep to this trade. Set the youth free! set him free! Did he do anything unfair, Maillot? Speak!”

“No!” answered the adventurer who had ridden beside Albert, and who was one of those that had taken their places at the table; “but he killed my sworn brother Chapelle. I claim his blood, and his blood I will have.”

"Pooh! nonsense!" exclaimed Griffith: "the lad did his duty bravely; no one can say more. Let him go! let him go!"

"Not till I have his head," said the man they called Maillot. "He is my prisoner: I took him, and I have a right to dispose of him as I will."

"But you did not take him in fair fight," said Griffith: "if I understood Harvè right, you came upon him while he was fighting with the other fellow, and seized him without resistance."

"It was Harvè seized him, and not Maillot," cried another man.

"I took him by one arm while Harvè caught him by the other," replied the man named Maillot; "and I say he shall die."

"I say he shall not," replied Griffith: "at all events not till Sir Robert Knowles decides upon it. I determine that at once, Master Maillot; and if you dare to show your refractory spirit any more, I will cleave you down to the jaws for your pains. Hark ye, young man! I will take care that no harm shall happen to you. Sir Robert Knowles, our present leader, is a good soldier and a true knight; and he will not suffer a prisoner to be butchered in cold blood for any man's will. To-morrow some of our party will move hence and go back into Maine, where Sir Robert is. You shall go with them, and in the mean time you shall have free quarters in the castle here."

As he spoke, one of those who were sitting at the table with him leant across and spoke to the leader in a low voice, nothing being heard but the words, "Maillot—find means—blood-thirsty—take care!"

"By heaven!" exclaimed Griffith when the other had done—"by heaven! he had better not, for he should not himself be alive many hours after. But to make all sure, some one give the youth back his sword. He looks as if he could defend himself right well."

While the sword was handed to Albert Denyn, who gladly thrust the scabbard back into his belt again, the man named Maillot gazed upon him with fierce and angry eyes, turning from time to time towards his companion Griffith, and gnawing his lip as if he would vainly have given vent to his indignation, but did not dare to do so. Griffith took no notice of him, but still was evidently irritated and somewhat excited by the man's demeanour; and in order to have an excuse for not remarking it, spoke in a low tone to one of those who sat at

table with him. A short period of reflection, however, showed Maillot that he was placing himself in circumstances of danger, and made him determine somewhat to change his manner. It was with difficulty, however, that he could sufficiently repress his feelings to say in a sullen voice—

"You will do as you like, Master Griffith; but I do think it somewhat hard that my prisoner should be thus suffered purposely to escape under the pretence of sending him to Knowles; for nothing else can be meant by letting him go free in this way. Why, the first time the gates of the castle are open he will pass through, of course, if he be not a fool; and then I not only lose my revenge, but any ransom, too, which I might get, if Knowles says he shall not be killed."

"Come, that is fair enough," said one of the men at the table; "we must not do injustice, Griffith."

"He can't escape; he won't escape," said Griffith; "no fear of that. Hark ye, young man! give us your parole—your word of honour, I mean—that come what may you will not try to escape."

"Rescue or no rescue?" demanded Albert Denyn.

"Ay," answered Griffith, "rescue or no rescue."

"And what if I refuse?" said Albert.

"Why," answered Griffith laughing at the youth's boldness—"why, then, my young condition-maker, I shall take leave to thrust you into prison instead of letting you walk about the castle."

"Do so, then," replied Albert, "for I will have no hand in giving up my liberty voluntarily."

"On my life!" answered Griffith, "you are a determined youth, but nevertheless I will not see wrong done you. If you value the free air so little, you must lose it; but for the rest, no man shall take your life while I can prevent it, except it be in fair and open fight. Still, as you like a prison, a prison you shall have. Let him be put into the tower on the left hand of the gate, since such is his fancy. There he will find strong doors enough, and I wish him joy of his solitude; for I think he will see nothing but a heron in the ditch, and perhaps not even that."

"I should think not," replied another, "for Pierrot with his crossbow would not let any bird rest there long. There! away with him, away with him! We have had enough of such gossip for once."

As they spoke, one of the men laid his hands upon the collar of Albert Denyn and pulled him somewhat rudely away, Griffith exclaiming, at the same time, "Give him fool though;

give him food! It is not good to be hungry in prison, as I can tell my friends. I recollect once catching a rat that visited me in my dungeon at Evreux, and saying grace most devoutly over my supper, though I was obliged to eat him raw notwithstanding."

A loud laugh burst from the whole of the adventurers at the idea of their companion's dainty meal, and Albert Denyn was led out of the room to be conducted to the place of his temporary abode.

. CHAPTER XII.

THERE is nothing so difficult to bear, nothing which requires so much courage of the most serviceable kind to endure, as anxiety in solitude and inactivity. The very movement of the mind when we suffer great agitation lightens its weight; but when we have to sit and count the livelong hours alone, confined to one small space and limited to mere reflection, thought becomes a burden and imagination a torment, and every feeling of our heart seems to war against our peace.

Thus it was with Albert Denyn. So long as he was in the presence of the adventures, he had the ideas of personal danger to occupy him. He had felt the other evils of his situation comparatively little, and had looked upon the imprisonment, to which he in some degree voluntarily subjected himself, as something requiring no great fortitude to bear; but when he was actually thrust into the chamber where he was to pass an indefinite space of time, and where he might have to undergo anything that his captors chose to inflict upon him, his heart gradually sank, and a deep and overwhelming feeling of melancholy took possession of him.

The first half-hour, indeed, was broken by two visits from one of the adventurers, who brought him some food and a pitcher of good wine. The man seemed a good-natured personage, spoke to him in a kindly tone, and, though he accused him of folly in not promising to hold himself as a prisoner, rescue or no rescue, he still assured him that he would be taken good care of, and that no harm would happen to him.

After he was gone, however, the hours wore away slowly; and though Albert tasted the food which was set before him, and tried to occupy a part of the time in any manner, yet he felt no appetite, and was obliged to betake himself to a prisoner's wonted occupation of pacing up and down the room. Weariness, however, at length overcame him; and lying down upon the ground—for they had not yet furnished him with either bed or stool—he placed his arm under his head for re-

pillow and fell into a sound sleep. It lasted some time, and loud laughter in some of the neighbouring parts of the building was the first thing that roused him. The sound of merriment, as may be conceived, was harsh to his ear, for he had been dreaming of Adela de Mauvinet: a vague, confused, wild vision it was of dangers and terrors, which, even when he woke, left him disturbed and agitated. He found, however, that though his sleep had been thus restless, it must have been very deep; for somebody had visited the chamber during his slumber, and had left a settle and a table, and also put down some straw in one corner of the room.

The sight of these few articles of furniture was a much greater comfort to the poor youth than might be supposed; for before he had fallen asleep he had remarked a window above him, which he could by no means reach so as to gaze from it out into the country beyond; but the tall stool which had been brought enabled him to see with ease, resting his arms in the deep opening of the wall.

When he first looked out, the mellow evening sun was just approaching the verge of the sky, and all the bright and beautiful colours of an autumn evening were tinging the clouds and hanging on the woods and fields around. The country was not particularly beautiful; but there was something in that bright evening light which gave it a loveliness that it would not otherwise have possessed. Each green slope seemed rounded with gold, and a rich misty purple rested on all the woods and dells around. The fantastic vapours that hung upon the edge of the sky changed every moment in hue and in form, as if they had been full of life and playing with the setting sun; and everything on which the eye of Albert rested recalled to his memory many a happy day, when, on such an autumn-tide as that, his own fancy had seemed to take part with the light clouds and join in their sports with the departing rays.

After any deep passion, however, has taken possession of our hearts, it seizes, like some invading tyrant in a conquered country, upon every bright thing within us, whether it be sweet memories, or warm hopes, or grand energies, appropriating all to its purposes, and marking them as its own for ever. It was thus with the heart of Albert Denyn. The sight of that fair sunset called back the memories of dear early days; but instantly, with those memories, came the image of Adela de Mauvinet, mingling the painful fears and apprehensions that the circumstances in which she was placed might naturally call forth, with every happier feeling to which the

associations connected with the sight before his eyes would have otherwise given rise.

Where was she? he asked himself: what had become of her? Was she still wandering in the wood alone, or had her father and the captal come to her deliverance? It was all vague, and uncertain, and terrible; and however strongly Hope might raise her voice in a young bosom, fear for the time was predominant, and sadness altogether took possession of Albert's heart.

The sun had half gone down, and half of the broad golden disc was still seen above the distant forest, when Albert perceived two or three mounted men coming over the slope of a hill half-way between the castle and the woods. Immediately after the horsemen came some persons on foot, and then others leading horses, amongst whom the youth thought he could distinguish the flutter of a woman's garments, and his heart sank with a sensation of dread and apprehension which language can scarcely convey.

He asked himself if it could be Adela; if she had really fallen into the hands of some brutal band of plunderers; and his heart seemed prophetically to answer "Yes!"

Ere the party came near enough for him to distinguish anything clearly, the sun sank altogether amongst the trees, and the group on which his eyes were fixed grew more and more dim, till at length it was lost to his sight. But still Albert remained convinced that Adela was a captive there, and leaping down into the room, he walked backwards and forwards in a state almost approaching distraction.

It was some time before reflection came to his aid; but when he did take time to think, he remembered that the lady might perhaps be more safe in the hands of the adventurers than any woman of a lower rank. Her ransom was sure to be large if she were treated with all honour, and the vengeance of her father and the whole of France was to be dreaded if any harm befel her; so that he could not but judge that the free companions would show her tenderness and respect as soon as they were aware of her name, which she would undoubtedly make known as soon as she fell into their power.

Albert tried to comfort himself with such thoughts, but still his heart beat with anxiety and alarm; and in a few minutes after, the sound of a trumpet, apparently coming from the court-yard, a number of voices speaking, and a loud tongue calling upon the name of several women, seemed to indicate the arrival of the party he had seen. The pace,

however, soon resumed its tranquillity; and a period of about a quarter of an hour passed without any other sound, till at length there was a considerable noise; and several voices speaking in the adjoining passage were heard, with the sound of coming footsteps, and now and then a sharp oath.

The steps paused at the door of the chamber in which Albert was confined, and the door was thrown violently open, admitting the blaze of a torch. At first the light dazzled him; but, the moment after he perceived in the hands of some of the adventurers without that strange, uncouth-looking being whom he had found contending with Caillet in defence of Adela.

Although it cannot be said that the young man felt pleasure at the sight of any human being deprived of liberty, and although the appearance of the old man but tended to confirm his apprehensions in regard to Adela's being captured, yet certainly it was a relief to behold some one who could give him a knowledge of the exact truth.

Fearful, however, that he might be deprived of even that satisfaction, if his captors perceived that there was any feeling of interest between him and the person whom they seemed to destine for his fellow-prisoner, he remained perfectly silent, and kept as far back as possible in the chamber. The old man was thrust in with unnecessary violence; and it is probable that those who brought him thither had already treated him somewhat roughly, for one of the leaders who came up at the moment exclaimed—

"Calmly, calmly! Remember his age."

As soon as the new captive was in the chamber the door was shut, and the two prisoners were left in utter darkness. For some minutes neither of them spoke, though the elder was heard muttering to himself, but the words were indistinct to any other ears than his own. Albert kept silence for a moment or two, lest any one who might be near should overhear what he was about to say; and he still heard various voices speaking without, when suddenly, to his surprise, his strange companion burst into a loud and vehement laugh.

"You seem to bear your imprisonment lightly," said Albert at length: "would that I could laugh as you do!"

"Why do you not, then?" demanded the old man: "but you need not tell me; I know why as well as you do. It is that you have known so few and such slight sorrows that a day's imprisonment, even in such a chamber as this, with every comfort and aid to boot, is to you as heavy a grief as the loss of all that makes life valuable would be to me. Mig-

fortune is a hard master and requires a long apprenticeship, young man."

"Doubtless," answered Albert—"doubtless it is so; but yet I cannot but think a long imprisonment, the uncertainty of our future fate, and a separation, perhaps for ever, from those we love best, might well make us sad, even if we had more philosophy than I pretend to."

"I will tell you what, youth," answered the old man—"the time may come when the loss of friends, the breaking of all hopes, the disappointment of every expectation, the murder of your children or your relations, the agonies, the tears, and the ruin of those you love best on earth, will so teach you to expect misfortune, that a brief imprisonment such as you have met with now will seem to you as a relief from worse, rather than a disappointment of your hopes. This, I tell you, may happen to you. It has happened to many of your relations before, and why not to you also?"

"How do you know," answered Albert, "that it has befallen any of my relations?"

"Because they were men," replied his strange companion; "therefore all must have suffered, and some must have suffered thus. Thus, too, very likely you will suffer when your appointed time is come."

"Perhaps it may be so," said the youth: "I have a good foretaste of such suffering even now."

"Call you what you now endure a foretaste of such sufferings?" cried the old man; "call you this, then, a foretaste—this, which is but a mere nothing? It is mere foolishness. The time will be when you shall look back to this period and wish it could come over again."

"No," answered Albert firmly; "no: what I felt yesterday can hardly ever be surpassed by what I may feel hereafter. No, it cannot be! What may be my future fate I do not know; but of one thing I am certain—that there were moments in the course of last night which no after sorrow can ever surpass: nay, nor can they exceed that which I feel now, ignorant as I am of what has befallen the daughter of my noble and generous lord."

His fellow-prisoner remained silent for several moments, and then replied, "You wish to know what has become of her. She is here—in this very castle—but a few yards distant."

"As I thought," said Albert; "as I thought! This is indeed terrible; but they dare not, surely they dare not treat her ill."

"No," answered the old man; "oh, no! Fear not for that; they will not treat her ill. Fools as they are, they are too wise for that."

"I trust they are," said Albert; "I trust they are; and yet what reliance can be placed in such men? Their passions are their guides as often as their interests."

"That is true," replied his companion, "that is very true; you are wiser than I thought you, youth; and yet you have a right to be wise too. But make your mind at ease. The wife of the man named Griffith is here in the castle even now, and she is a woman of high birth herself."

"Of high birth!" exclaimed Albert, "and the wife of an adventurer like this?"

"Even so," answered the old man. "Know you not that half of those who live by plundering their fellow-creatures call themselves of high race, and that many of them have well won the only title to nobility which this age knows, by shedding more blood than any of the other barbarous monsters of the time? But do what I was saying. The wife of this Griffith is here. The lady has been taken to her chamber, and there she will be safe. I have heard them talking about her ransom already. When I look back upon the past," he continued, after a momentary pause—"when I look back upon the past, I often think that the light sorrows of youth are as heavy to those that bear them as the weightier woes of age. There was an old Greek, a slave, who dealt in *fabliaux*—I know not whether you have heard of him."

"Oh, yes," replied Albert. "His name was *Æsopus*."

"The same, the same!" replied the old man, whose learning did certainly surprise Albert Denyn. "That old Greek told a story of a hare running a race with a tortoise, which was intended to represent the heedless lightness of youth contending against the cautious experience of age; but while he showed that the slow perseverance of the one ultimately outdid the excessive activity of the other, he should have shown also that the hare might have been crushed to death under a weight which the tortoise would hardly have felt. Thus it is with age and youth: the apathy of age is a hard spell, which enables it to bear cares a thousand times more heavy than those which would at once crush youth under their burden. We have so many times in life the opportunity of practising the art of endurance, that it would be hard if we did not learn the lesson ere we had done."

"Thank God that I have heard of the lady's safety, however!" said Albert—"that is one great satisfaction; and with

it I will comfort myself, although your picture of life is not altogether consolatory."

"It is such as life is," replied the old man, "and such as you will find it, youth. The man who sees fifty years and finds anything still to enjoy in life is either a beast or a fool; for by that time all the better parts of our nature have discovered that their home is in another place."

"And yet," said Albert Denyn, "you laughed right heartily but now."

"That did I," rejoined his companion: "I laughed—I did not smile; and laughter is only a sign of sadness or of folly, not of happiness. Happiness never does more than smile. It is that insane thing merriment, or mockery, or scorn, or despair, that laughs. I laughed in mockery of those who shut me in here."

"And why in mockery?" demanded Albert. "Good faith! I have not the heart to mock them: they have too much power over me for me to scorn them."

"They have no power over me," replied the old man. "I will tell you hereafter why I laughed, and why I scorn them: let it be sufficient for you now to know that the lady is safe."

"That is indeed much," replied Albert; "and I could almost content myself with being assured that such is the case, if I had any means of informing my good lord, her father, that she runs no risk. But that is hopeless."

"Ha!" said the old man; "ha! we may find such means, nevertheless: yet why would you send him such tidings?"

"Why?" exclaimed Albert—"has he not been a friend, a father to me? And were it not so, is he not a human being, a parent, whose heart must be now bleeding with apprehension, and grief, and terrible anxiety?"

"Then he really loves his daughter?" said the old man in a cold tone.

"Loves her!" exclaimed Albert—"how can he help loving her? Loves her! better than his own life; better than aught else on earth except his honour!"

"By so much the more," replied the old man in a stern tone, "will he condemn the presumptuous thoughts that are in your bosom, youth."

Albert Denyn was silent for a moment—not with shame, but he was surprised and pained to find that his feelings towards Adela showed themselves so plainly, that the scanty means of observation which the old man as yet possessed were nevertheless sufficient to discover a secret which he had thought well concealed from all eyes but those which watched

him with such keenness and suspicion as had been displayed by Caillet.

He answered quite calmly, however, when he did speak; for, although his own eyes had now been long opened to all that was passing in his heart—though he felt and knew that he loved with all the ardour, as well as the devotion, of the deepest passion—yet his love was utterly without the presumption of a single hope. He felt so humble in his affection that he was not moved by many of the agitating emotions which affect other men under the influence of the same passion; and although it certainly was his purpose to hide his love for his lord's daughter, out of respect and reverence, yet he was so conscious of rectitude of purpose, as well as of humility of feeling, that though he did not wish, yet he did not much fear discovery:

"You are mistaken," he replied at length, in a tone so tranquil and cool as to surprise his hearer; "you are mistaken. I have no presumptuous thoughts in my bosom, old man: my thoughts are as humble as my station."

"Do you pretend to say," demanded his strange companion, "do you pretend to say that you do not love this lady?"

"God forbid!" answered Albert. "I love her with my whole heart and soul. I would willingly sacrifice my life for her; and yet, old man, all this can be without one presumptuous thought. Can you not understand this?"

The old man paused for a moment, and then replied, "I can understand it well; but I knew not that you could either understand or feel it."

"Why, what can you know," asked Albert, "either of me or of my nature, by seeing me in circumstances of excitement for some five short minutes? I should almost think that in this dark place you mistook me for some one else, were it not for what you say of the Lady Adela."

"No!" replied the old man—"no: I make no mistake—your voice is enough for me. I never forget sounds that I once hear, and I should know your voice amidst the shout of an army. But you are wrong in another point: this is not the first time that I have seen, these are not the only means I have had of knowing you. From your birth till now I have been near you. But all that matters not. What have I to do in life but to watch those that are around me; to mark their qualities, and to hate or love them as those qualities may require?"

"Methinks," replied Albert, "it might be as well to leave them without either hate or love."

"Not so, not so," answered the old man: "to hate and to love is a necessity of our nature: nay, more—it is an ordinance of God. Not to abhor vice, not to feel affection for virtue, is to share with the evil. Vice is in fact only a bolder sort of indifference to virtue. I would almost rather see a man wicked than the friend of wicked men."

There was something strange and rambling in the old man's discourse, which certainly had so much of singularity in it as to lead Albert to imagine that his reason was somewhat unsettled. The singularity of his appearance, which has been already described, might not alone have produced such a conviction; for in that age, what we should now call eccentricity in that particular shape was not only common, but was absolutely sanctioned by the superstitions of the day. Many a man still thought he was doing God good service and ensuring the salvation of his soul by wearing rough garments of skins, feeding upon roots, and separating himself from his fellow-men: so that to encounter a person habited like Albert's present companion, and to find him a devout, discreet, and sensible person, though somewhat tinged with fanaticism, was by no means a common case. The peculiarity of the opinions, however, which the old man entertained, without any inquiry as to whether they were right or wrong, might well lead the youth to imagine that his intellect was somewhat shaken; for in those days it was rare indeed to find any one who went out of the beaten track.

Judging thus of his companion's state of mind, Albert cared not to enter into any abstruse discussions, but turned the conversation back to what the old man had been saying in regard to himself. "Was it from knowing that I was the companion of wicked men, then," he asked, "that you supposed me filled with presumptuous thoughts, which certainly I never entertained? I know not that I ever showed myself the friend of wicked men: when have I done so, my good friend?"

"Have you not been always the companion and the friend of this very Gaillet, to whom you show so mortal a hatred now that a rivalry has sprung up between you? Who was so often seen with him as yourself? who seemed to share his thoughts and his counsels but yourself?"

"Nay, nay, you are much mistaken," replied Albert, eagerly: "circumstances cast us together, but not affection: there was a link between us which bound us to companionship, with our hearts unbound. We were both serfs in a house where all were noble around us except the other servants of the mansion, who were all differently treated from

ourselves. They were, indeed, a separate order of beings in mind as well as in treatment; but in scarcely any respect was there a distinction made between us and those noble pages whom, from time to time, the highest personages in the land sent to receive instruction in the house of our generous and knightly master. If there was a difference, it was only that more knowledge was given to us than to them; that to us were opened the stores of ancient learning; that for us all the knowledge of the schools was poured forth; and that, as the lord wished to place us in the church, we were taught many an art and many a science that the high nobles of the land did not receive. Thus were we companions from early years, though he was older than I, and thus were we cast upon each other for society, by similarity of situation, though not of tastes. He, however, was discontented with all things: I was with all things well contented. I might regret, it is true, that I was not one of the nobles whom I saw from day to day. I might wish that fortune had placed me amongst them; but I hated them not because such was not my lot. I was happy, I was grateful for the superior instruction accorded to me, and for the kindly treatment I received; but Caillet vowed, for his part, that he would rather have remained in ignorance and in the lowest state of bondage than acquire knowledge, which only showed him the evils of his station. He detested the nobles of the land, and avowed that detestation when conversing with those who he believed would not report the fact; and such was I. Not that he ever loved me, but that I was the only one in the same state and situation as himself—the only one, in short, to whom he could freely speak his feelings. He knew that I would not betray him, and therefore he dared to say to me what he thought; but his feelings and mine were always different, and he was sure to encounter opposition and dispute. Thus were we, as I have said, companions without being friends, till by his last act he has ended the companionship also; and if ever we spend another half-hour together, it will be the last that one or the other will see in this world."

"Did the Lord of Mauvinet teach you the use of arms?" demanded the old man in a slow and thoughtful tone: "you seem skilful with the sword."

"I was early taught," replied Albert, "to wield all such weapons as peasants are permitted to employ, and the sword was placed in my hands when I was very young. Afterwards, my noble lord—though I cannot say that he caused me to be taught to bear the weapons of a man-at-arms, yet

when he saw how much delight I took therein—suffered me to learn the use of the lance, the management of the horse, and indeed all the exercises of chivalry. Caillet also had the same advantage; but I think he was not more skilful than myself. He was older and more confident, perhaps; but yet I should not fear to meet him in a good cause, even though he had some superiority.”

“And you would slay him, boy,” replied his companion; “for his heart is bad and yours is good; and the man who wants the armour of a just spirit has but a feeble defence in all external arms.”

“I know not,” answered Albert Denyn; “though I can well conceive that many a man, feeling his conscience ill at ease, may become weak and timid in the hour of danger. Such, however, I am sure, is not the case with Caillet. He thinks all that he does is right—not that he does it because he thinks it right, but that he thinks it right because he does it. I have heard him eagerly defend the same feelings and conduct in himself which I have heard him blame most bitterly in men of noble blood; and I never yet in all my life heard him acknowledge or saw him feel that he was wrong. Such a thing is not in his nature. Call him not—in heaven’s name call him not my friend,” he continued, reverting to what had passed before. “I should hate myself if I could ever have been a friend to one so base and utterly unworthy. But now that you have probed my spirit to the bottom, let me hear that which I own is of greater moment to me than all things. Tell me more of the lady; tell me all that you know concerning her. How came they not to find her? her father and the captal, I mean. How came she to be taken by these men? and what, think you, will be the result of the situation in which we are all placed?”

“Manifold questions,” answered the old man, “none of which I will answer now. Wait till after midnight be past,” he continued in a lower tone, “and I will then reply to you fully. I have that to tell you which may surprise you not a little. Now lay down your head upon the table, for you have need of repose.”

“I have slept already,” replied Albert.

But the old man instantly rejoined, “Sleep again, then; sleep again! What right has youth to think? Sleep again, I say, for not a word more shall you hear from my lips till after midnight; and it yet wants fully four hours of the time when the sun turns back again to this side of the earth.”

Albert Denyn saw by the faint light which found its way into the room from the moonlight sky without, that the old man crossed his arms upon his chest, and buried the greater part of his face in the skins of which his dress was formed; and perceiving that it would be useless to seek further conversation for the time, he too at length bent his head upon his folded hands, and remained silent, though he slept not.

CHAPTER XIII.

To an active mind there is something solemn, and even elevating, in the task of watching in the night. The silence, the darkness, have their effect; the sally-ports of the ear and the eye are closed. The spirit shut up within its citadel holds no intercourse with the world without. The thoughts, the feelings, the fancies, the passions, which form the turbulent garrison of the human heart, cut off from communion with all the busy things of external life, may be reviewed by reason and brought under the rod of judgment. Well used, an hour's watching in the midst of the night is often more valuable to the mind of man than whole years of the busy life of day. The world and all its important littleness seem for the time to be dead; the immortal being within us feels alone in the presence of its God; the heart speaks to the heart of all the higher purposes of life; and the clay that encumbers us appears to be in a degree cast aside, together with our intercourse with other earthly creatures. If ever spirit triumphs over matter in this world, it is in the hours of solemn and silent watching in the midst of the night.

Albert Denyn remained without speaking for a long time; and although his watch was not so still and calm as it might have been at a later hour, still it gave opportunity for thought, which was not lost upon him. From time to time there came sounds of voices speaking, of merriment, of laughter, and of song; but gradually these bursts became shorter, the intervals longer, and the silence between more profound, till at length all became still, while the gloom was increased by the moon sinking behind the hills, and leaving nothing within the sight of the watchers in the prison but a bright star shining through the high window, like some of the mysterious truths of revelation, bright and wonderful amidst darkness, but casting no light upon any other object.

In the mean while Albert communed with his own heart. At first his feelings and thoughts were turbulent and wild, refusing all control, so that, though he felt they wanted regularity, he almost despaired of their ever returning to order again. Gradually, however, of themselves they became more calm; and ere long he could reason collectedly, and thought and reflection brought on high resolves. He found that a passion had grown upon his heart which should never have taken root therein; and he accused himself or folly and of weakness, even although his own heart acquitted him of presumption. To cast that passion from him he never hoped: he never wished it; he felt it was impossible; but he believed that in a firm and noble spirit—and he knew his own—to be so—that passion itself might be so purified and elevated as to lead him on to great and worthy deeds, to be a new principle of action in his breast, to inspire high purposes and efforts, and give a mightier energy to the chivalrous spirit that existed within him.

He fancied that the very thought of what would be Adela's feelings, if she heard by chance of some great enterprise achieved by him, would carry him on to exertions that nothing could resist; and thus judgment and reason employed the power of fancy to lead and guide the passions of his heart to grand purposes, rather than in the paths of vice and wrong. So may we always do in life if our will be towards virtue rather than crime.

Thus had passed the time for many hours; silence had fallen completely over the world; and Albert had more than once turned his eyes impatiently towards a spot on the other side of the chamber at which he could faintly perceive a dim, obscure mass, marking the place where the old man sat, but had not seen the slightest movement nor heard the lightest sound. At length, however, the clear voice of a cock crowing at some distance came upon the air, and his strange companion suddenly broke silence. "Now, now," he said, "I will tell you what you wish to hear, and more than you expect; for the time is coming when you may act as well as speak."

"Tell me first of the Lady Adela," exclaimed Albert: "it is of her. I would fain have tidings, old man."

"Call me not old man," replied the other; "that is not my name, youth, though I be old, and though I be a man."

"I would willingly give you your own name if I knew it," answered Albert Denyn.

"Call me Walleran Urgel," said his companion: "that is

the name which the people give me; and as to the lady, be satisfied that she is well and safe. The object of these plunderers is to win gold. They are like children piling up heaps for the purpose of casting them all to the winds the next moment. Still their object is gold; and while they have so fair a chance of gaining a great sum by this poor girl's ransom, they will not risk the loss of it by doing her any injury. No, no; they have given her a chamber near that of their leader's wife, and there she will be tended with all due courtesy. To-morrow they will bid her write to her father, showing what gentle usage she has received and naming the ransom they have fixed; but they will hold out the fear of less gentle deeds if he should attempt to recover her by force of arms. So much for that. Your second question was, how she was taken by these men ——"

"And how it happened that her father and the capital found her not," added Albert, "for they were close behind."

"Of that I know nothing," replied the old man; "but how they took her I can tell right well. I left you contending with the villain Caillet, and sought the lady to give her help. She had seen me defend her with my axe, and so she trusted me; but when the men came up who took you prisoner, we had well-nigh fallen into their hands at once, for she thought it was her father's party, and would have darted forward to meet them had I not shown her who they really were. I then led her to a place of security, made her a bed of leaves, sheltered her from the winds of night, and lighted her a fire, to dispel the damp of the forest; for she has ever been good to the poor and the lowly, and deserves the careful watching of all who love the noble and the kind. I promised to guide her safely back to her home the next day; but ere I could do so, at an early hour this morning these knavish companions, hearing that I was still in the neighbouring wood, came out to hunt me down like a wild beast."

"Why, what harm had you done them?" demanded Albert.

"None," replied the old man; "but do we need to harm others to make them harm us? No, no; not so in this world. For the last twelve years have I dwelt either in this old castle or in that dim wood. Neither in the wood nor the castle had I any right but sufferance; but the building itself was only tenanted by some servants of a lord who spent his days in rioting afar. They charitably gave me a dwelling in the winter time, and all the bright summer I spent in the green forest. With the chambers, the passages, the towers, and even the dungeons of this place, and with the most secret

paths of the wood, no one in all the land is so well acquainted as I am; and when, some ten days ago, these filthy robbers came and took possession of the place, I fled and sought refuge where you saw me last night. There is a tower herein to which they could find no entrance, and it is called the Stairless Tower. They thought, it seems, that it must contain treasure; and the people they found here told them that none knew its secrets but myself, for they had seen me more than once upon the top, when they, poor fools! could not find the way up. This led to more inquiries; and as wicked men never feel safe in their wickedness, the plunderers fancied that my knowledge of the place would be dangerous to them, if, as they intend to do, they kept possession of it, as a sort of advanced post on the side of Touraine. They sent out one party to seek me many days, hoping to lure me back with promises and offers; but they found me not, and at length this morning they deputed another to hunt me down like a wild beast."

"But the Lady Adela," cried Albert Denyn; "what became of her?"

"I had watched the lady through the night, upon the old man; "but she slept not till just before the morning's dawn, when her eyes grew heavy and a short slumber came upon her. Not long after, I heard some sounds; and though the fire had now sunk low, there came a smoke and the crackling of wood, with shouts and cries from several sides; a light redder than the morning, too, began to glare upon the trees; and I soon found that the villains had tracked me into the covert, and had then set fire to the wood to burn me out. I had still hopes to baffle them, and for some time wound through paths they knew not of, leading the lady by the hand; but it proved all in vain: they had guarded the outlets well, and when we issued forth they were upon us. They shouted loud at their double prize; and though they became more reverent when they heard the lady's name, yet they were not the less joyful. On reaching this place they first provided for her comfort. The leader's wife was called, and maids, and women; and with as much ceremony as if the desolate castle had been a court, she was ushered to her chamber. They then turned to me, mocked my contorted back, bade me stretch out my lengthy arms, and made sport of me for some ten minutes, till they bethought them of the Stairless Tower: then their greediness would know no delay. They took me to the foot of it and told me instantly to show them the way; but I was lord now, and I laughed them to scorn, telling them

they should never know from me till they asked me with lowered voices and in humbler terms; till they promised me part of the spoil and seasoned their offers with fine words. They saw I mocked them, and thrust me in here, threatening me with torture on the morrow if I still remained refractory. When the morning comes, however, for me they will look in vain. Had they really wished to torture me, the time was when their hands were upon my shoulders."

"But how will you escape?" demanded Albert: "the walls of this prison are thick, the door by which they brought us in is strong; and I see not how any one could free himself from this place without tools for breaking out, such as we do not possess. There are stout bars upon that window, good Walleran; and though they have left me my sword, yet it would take many a long day, I fear, to wrench off those bars, even if it could be done at all."

The old man laughed aloud.

"Listen, youth," he replied at length. "I said I would tell you something you did not expect to hear. What if I set you free this very night, this very hour? What if I show you the means by which such a youth as you are can be back at the castle of Mauvinet before mid-day to-morrow?"

Albert started up. "Do you jest or speak in earnest?" he exclaimed: "can it be possible?"

"In serious earnest," answered the other; "and so possible is it that I will do it."

"But Adela?" said Albert, hesitating—"but the Lady Adela? can I leave her here?"

"What good can you do her by remaining?" demanded the old man.

"But little, in truth," answered Albert; "yet still, while there is a possibility of assisting her, I would fain be near. If we can fly, why can she not fly also? You know where they have placed her: can we not find some means of communicating with her and telling her what we intend to do?"

"All this is very possible," replied the old man, "and she may even fly, if she will trust herself to you."

"She will," replied Albert; "I am sure she will."

"Be not too sure till you have heard the whole," replied his companion. "There are dangers and difficulties to be encountered, young man, which may not be easily overcome, and it may seem better to her to wait for the ransom from her father."

"At all events, she shall have the choice," replied Albert, "if I can give it her."

"That you shall be enabled to do if you will," replied the other; "but there may be perils in so doing which even you may not choose to risk."

"None, none!" cried Albert Denyn, resolutely: "there is no difficulty, no danger I would not undertake to set her free. I would lose this right hand to be the man that gave her liberty."

"Idle talk! idle talk!" said the old man; "boyish passion all! But hear me, and then act as you think fit. Your own liberty is easy of attainment, for there is in fact no obstacle in your way."

"How no obstacle," exclaimed Albert Denyn, "when these barred windows, and——"

"Oh, the rash and presumptuous heart of youth!" exclaimed his companion; "never waiting till it understands, seldom even listening till it hears! I tell you there is in fact no obstacle in your way to liberty; but in order to set her free you must enter the castle again; you must swim the moat to reach it; you must find your way in darkness and in solitude through passages which no feet but mine have trodden for many years, and then through rooms where each instant you are likely to be seized and murdered."

"Never mind!" cried Albert; "I fear not. I will set her free, or die."

"Ay; but when you have found her," added the old man—"when she has agreed to fly with you—when you have led her back by those same difficult passages—remember there is still the moat to cross, and it is both broad and deep."

"I thought not of that," said Albert with a sigh; "I thought not of that."

"But in such enterprises we should think of all things," answered Walleran Urgel. "Now will you undertake it?"

"Without a doubt," replied Albert at once; "without the slightest doubt or hesitation whatsoever. I have swam three times that distance with heavier burdens than she is, and I fear not."

• "But very likely she may fear," replied the old man.

"Perhaps she may," replied Albert Denyn; "I am afraid she will; but at all events she shall have the choice. I would risk far more for a less object than that."

"Well, then," rejoined his companion, "if you are so resolved, you shall not want the means. Mount upon that stool and make your way through the window."

"But the bars, the bars!" said Albert, "how am I to remove the bars?"

"Take the grating by the lower edge," said the old man, "and pull with all your strength."

Albert did as Walleran bade him, but the bars remained immovable.

"It is in vain," he said, turning round; "it is altogether in vain."

"So soon are youth's best energies checked by disappointment," rejoined the other. "For a great object you must have more than courage: you must have resolution. You must have even more than resolution: you must have perseverance unto death. Now, then, put to your strength and try again—but not as before, not as before! Lift the bars upward. Do they move?"

"Yes, yes!" exclaimed Albert eagerly; "they slide up as if by magic."

"There is no magic like a little knowledge," replied the old man. "Now mark what I say, and proceed gently; for if you do not you will call listening ears this way, or even perchance wake those that sleep. The bars have moved upwards; now they will move outwards, too, and, falling on a hinge below, will make you a ladder to descend; but you must hold them fast and let them down gently, or the clang will rouse others, with whose presence we can well dispense."

Albert followed exactly the directions he received, and without any trouble lowered down the whole grating, which, being pushed onwards when once raised, freed itself from the grooves in which the two ends moved, and turning on pivots in the lower rim, swung over and hung down against the wall. It required great strength, indeed, to hold the mass of iron-work up so that it descended without noise; but the joy with which Albert saw the task accomplished would be very, very difficult to tell.

"Now," said the old man, as soon as this was done, "make your way down to the ground beneath the wall; then, before you cross the moat, creep round along the narrow ridge of earth between the masonry and the water. After you have passed three round towers, you will come to a square one which dips itself into the moat; there you must plunge in and swim across; and then going round to the other side of that square tower, you must enter the moat again and swim over once more. You will there find, not far from the place where you cross, a small archway like the mouth of a conduit. Bow your head and enter it; then go on straight. It will lead you to some stairs, and when you have mounted them you will find yourself in a narrow passage, at the end of which

there is a door with a latch in the inside; lift that latch and the next step takes you into the corridor leading to the chief rooms in the building. Where they have lodged the lady I cannot exactly tell, but I heard some mention made of a small room, which you will find the third upon the left-hand side. There you must try your fortune: I can help you no more, for I have now told you all I know."

"I give you many thanks," replied Albert, "and will now speed away; but ere I go, let me at least aid you to descend from the window: you are neither so young nor so strong as I am, and it were well that you should have some one with you while you cross the moat."

"Alas! good youth," replied the old man, "you must leave me behind; I cannot pass the water as you can. My crippled frame could never learn the art which will soon bear you to the other side."

"But I can support you," replied Albert: "it has ever been a sport of my youth to carry great weights across the moat at Mauvinet, which is far broader than this seems to be."

"Nay, nay," replied the old man—"go you upon your way. Fear not for me; I will find other means to fly. Fear not for me, I say—I shall be safe; and even if they slew me here, what matter? Am I not old and crippled, poor, miserable, abandoned?"

"Yes," replied Albert; "but see, notwithstanding, that you are kind of heart and generous. I found you defending innocence and contending with a villain; and now you take an interest in me and set me free. I would fain, therefore, aid you before I go."

"What!" exclaimed the old man, as if speaking to himself—"what! one to love and to esteem me! But go, go, good youth; this enterprise will cost you time: I will find my way forth alone. I tell you that within these walls, at least, they cannot keep me; but be careful of yourself, for your task is a harder one than mine; and remember, leave the door which leads into the corridor open behind you; for once closed, you will not find it again." He added some more directions, which Albert stored carefully in his memory, and then, grasping the youth's hand in his large sinewy fingers, he bade God speed him and aided him to pass through the window.

When he was gone, the old man paused for a moment, listening for any sound, and then returned to his seat, saying, "He is noble and good! he is noble and good! What will be the end of all this? what will be the end?"

In the mean while, Albert, dropping from the window, found

himself on a small ridge of land immediately under the wall of the castle, with scarcely sufficient footing between him and the moat to admit of his proceeding step by step in the direction which he had been told to follow. Sometimes, however, the space grew wider, and enabled him to go on more rapidly; but his progress was necessarily so slow for some way that he was tempted more than once to plunge into the moat as the shortest method.

At length, however, a tall square tower presented itself, much larger than any of the others, with its foundations dipping into the moat as the old man had described; and without further hesitation Albert plunged in, and swam round till he reached the same shelf of land which recommenced on the other side of the tower.

After some search he found the small arch to which he had been directed, though the lower part of it was partially filled with water; and entering, in profound darkness, he found his way along, feeling with his hands against the wall, and sometimes stumbling over pieces of stone which had fallen from above, showing that no careful eye had for many years examined the spot to take precautions against decay. The description of Walleran Urgel had been so exact that the youth met with no great difficulty; and he soon reached the door, and found the latch which caused it to open.

Albert raised it gently, and the door moved back without noise; but the moment it did so a bright light burst in upon him, and instead of seeing before him a corridor as he had expected, he found himself entering a small chamber in which a light was burning. On two sides of the room appeared the old black oak wood-work which had originally lined the corridor; but on the other two sides the walls were composed of rough thick planking, bearing the marks of the saw fresh upon it; so that it was evident to Albert Denyn that the adventurers had converted the corridor into separate apartments since they had taken possession of the castle.

The light which struck him as he opened the door proceeded from a tall sconce containing three lamps, which apparently had not been trimmed for some hours; and Albert drew back as he marked the interior of the room, not doubting from all he saw that he was in the chamber of one of the free leaders. A large bed, occupying at least one-fourth of the small room, stood in the corner opposite, with the thick green curtains drawn closely round it. But all within was perfectly silent and still, so that it was clear the tenant of the room was either absent or asleep.

To advance offered certainly no small risk, and yet Albert could not make up his mind to return and leave the task he had undertaken unaccomplished. He paused, then, and gazed into the room for a moment, hesitating how to act; but the next instant he drew his sword and took a few steps forward, resolved at all events to go on. There was a door on either side in the new partitions. That on the left was fastened by two large wooden bolts, and against it lay a casque and a cuirass with a pair of heavy steel gloves, which it seemed scarcely possible to move without making some noise; but the other door, to which Albert next turned, was secured in a different manner. It opened into the room, and across it had been laid one of those moveable cupboards, few of which have descended to the present day, although their place has been supplied by things much less convenient. It must have cost some trouble to place it in the position which it then occupied, and while it there remained, no man unassisted could have forced open the door from without. Piled up upon it also were several other articles of furniture; and when Albert perceived all this caution to prevent any one entering the chamber during the slumbers of its occupant, a hope came upon him which made his heart beat wildly.

A moment after, his eye lighted upon some of the apparel of a lady; and instead of trying, as he had at first proposed, to make his way forth undiscovered by one of the doors, he now gently approached the bed and drew back one of the curtains.

His hopes had not deceived him. Before his eyes, overpowered by slumber, lay Adela de Mauviet, with one beautiful arm bent underneath her head, and the other resting on the cover of the bed, while the fair hand dropped gracefully over the edge. Her rich brown hair, which she had unloosed ere she cast herself down to take the repose which she so much needed, but almost feared to indulge, fell round her face and over her shoulders in beautiful profusion; and, lovely as Albert had always thought her, she seemed fairer, brighter than ever to his eyes, as she lay there, buried in deep, calm sleep, in the midst of such perils as those that surrounded her.

He stood and gazed upon her for several minutes, drinking deep draughts of love, if I may so express it, till at length the resolutions which he had that very night formed came back to his mind, and he instantly asked himself how he might best awake her without giving her alarm? At length, sheathing his sword, he knelt down by the bedside, threw back the

curtain that the light might fall full upon him, and then taking the hand that dropped over the edge, he pressed his lips tenderly but respectfully upon it.

Adela instantly awoke, started, raised herself partly on her arm, and gazed wildly at the youth as he knelt beside her. As soon as she saw who it was, however, a bright smile of joy lighted up her countenance. None of the particulars of her situation seemed to have been forgotten even in sleep; for, raising her finger, she said in a low tone, "Oh, Albert! is it possible? How came you hither? It is indeed joy to see you here; but speak low, speak low, for they are in that room, and there are people all around us."

"I am here, lady, to set you free," replied Albert, in a whisper. "I have been a prisoner like you, and have found means to escape. By those means also I can set you free; but I must not conceal from you that there are dangers and difficulties in the way, though I would not quit this place without offering you the opportunity of flying also."

"But how came you here?" demanded Adela. "I have been so anxious about you ever since you left me; for you were scarcely gone ere these men passed by, and I feared that they would find you contending with that base man Caillet."

Albert told her that they had done so; but she would not be satisfied until he had related all that had befallen him; and the interest and the pity that she showed as he proceeded were sweet but dangerous to his heart.

In return, while she related a part of what had occurred to her, she dwelt much and long upon the apprehensions she had entertained for him, speaking little of her own fears and sufferings; and it was a strange and somewhat agitating conversation for both that took place during the next half-hour, while, with Albert kneeling by her bedside, with whispered words and eyes gazing into each other's, they poured forth every feeling and thought of their bosoms—except that one passion which gave tone and depth to all the rest.

It may well be asked, "Was that one passion then not spoken? Was it possible at such a time, and in such circumstances, not to open the gates of the heart and set the imprisoned secret free?"

It was not spoken. Not a word did Albert utter that he would not have uttered in the halls of Mauvinet. There was as much deep respect in manner and in gesture, but from his countenance he could not banish what he felt: it sparkled in his eyes; it was heard, too, in his tone, whenever Adela's dangers, or griefs, or sufferings were mentioned. Neither

did she name the name of love—nor, indeed, did she think of it at that moment. In the agitation, the fears, the cares, the hopes of such a situation, she looked upon the youth beside her only as the companion of her infancy and her girlhood—as the person in whom she had most confidence on earth, to whom she could speak as to a brother. If her tones were those of love—if her look was that of deep affection—it was that the moment was one of those when circumstances break down the barriers which we raise in our hearts against our own feelings, and when the stream of passion flows forth without our will, mingling with the whole current of our actions.

However that may be, during that night a new consciousness came upon the heart of Albert Denyn—the consciousness that he was beloved; and however he might school himself, he could not so far play the hypocrite with his own soul as to wish that it were otherwise.

Though much was said and many a thing was told, their conversation was but short, for their words were as quickly spoken as the time required. And though Albert could have remained there in that sweet intercourse for ever, it became necessary that he should press Adela to decide whether she would attempt to fly with him or not. He informed her of all she would have to encounter; he showed her that he should be obliged to swim with her across the moat; and after a moment's hesitation she replied—

"No, Albert, no—you shall not risk your life for me any more."

"There is no danger, dear lady," he replied; "there is no risk of that kind: I know I can do it with ease. I only fear for you who have suffered so terribly already; I dread that the cold and the night wandering might injure—nay, even kill you."

"Perhaps it might," she said, in a sad tone; "perhaps it might; and I cling weakly to life, Albert—I know not why."

"Oh, yes! live, live, dear lady!" replied Albert; "live for brighter days! live to make others happy, and to be happy also yourself!"

Adela made no reply for some moments; but her eyes filled with tears, and a look of deep sadness came over her whole countenance. "No," she said at length; "no, I will not fly at such a risk to you. Besides, I know my father will right gladly pay the ransom that they fix; and these men have treated me with all honour and some kindness, so that I have nothing to fear. Their chief himself, to give me security in my chamber, blocked up the door as you see there; the other door leads to the room where sleeps his child, and there are

also bolts which no strength could break. He showed me these things himself, and his wife gave me all comfort, and promised me her aid and protection. Under these circumstances it were wrong to risk so much. Go, then, Albert; go, and tell my father my situation. I know I need not ask him to set me free speedily. You will reach him probably even before the letter which they have made me write can inform him of my fate. Tell him I am well; far better, indeed, in health, than I could by any means have expected. I must not add that I am happy," she continued, "for that I am not—perhaps may never be so again."

Albert gazed sadly on the ground, but made no reply; and after a moment Adela added, "Now go, Albert; now go. May heaven send you a blessing for all that you have done for me!"

"One thing more, dear lady," replied Albert, "one thing more, before I do as you bid me. Recollect that the door by which I entered here, and which you see stand open there, is unknown to these people themselves. That passage might afford you a place of refuge in case their conduct towards you should change at any time. On the other side there is a lock; but I must see how it can be opened from this room."

It was not without difficulty that the method was discovered, for the wood-work fitted so close as to afford not the slightest indication of an opening when it was shut. At length, however, having found the way of closing and unclosing it at pleasure, and explained the means to Adela, Albert again approached to bid her adieu, and once more knelt by her side to kiss her hand.

"Oh, Albert!" she said, in the same low tone in which they had hitherto spoken, "it is a terrible thing to bid you go and leave me here alone, but it must be so at length. It is very, very terrible!" and she bent down her head till her eyes almost rested on her shoulder, while her tears fell thick and fast.

"Go, Albert!" she continued at length; "go—I will be thus selfish no longer. Go at once! Fare you well! fare you well! I shall never forget your kindness. Now leave me without another word, for I am weak and overcome already."

Albert felt that it would be best to depart, and only pausing to press his lips again upon her hand, he tore himself away and left her. In a few minutes he had passed through the long passage which conducted to the moat, and with a feeling of reckless self-abandonment he plunged in, without a moment's pause of thought.

The noise of his sudden leap into the water called the

attention of some one above, and a cry of "Who goes there?" was heard warning him to be more cautious. He made no reply, but swam gently on; and he could hear the man say to himself, "It must be a dog—I will give him a shot at all events." The next instant the twang of a crossbow met his ear, and a quarrel struck the water close beside him.

It was luckily too dark for anything to be seen distinctly, and proceeding as quietly and silently as possible, Albert reached the other side of the moat, and for a moment lay still under the shadow of the bank. The heedless soldier above seemed quite satisfied with what he had done, and in a few minutes walked on, whistling a light air; while Albert, on his part, crept slowly up the bank, and was soon amongst the fields of the open country.

All was dark, however: there were woods, and orchards, and vineyards around, and, entangled amongst them, Albert could for some time find no path, but, wandered without guide, and with no knowledge whither he was directing his steps. At length he came upon a road, which, though neither very wide nor very good, he judged to be much used, from the ruts and irregularities which it presented; and following it for about half-a-mile, the youth came suddenly upon a rising ground, whence he could discover, somewhat to his surprise and consternation, the faint outline of the castle he had just quitted, rising at the distance of a few hundred yards. He was once more turning away to seek some other path, when he was suddenly startled by the cry of "Who goes there?" and the next instant rough hands were laid upon his shoulders.

CHAPTER XIV.

LEAVING Albert Denyn in the hands of his captors, we must turn to follow the proceedings of the Count de Mauvinet and the Captal de Buch, who were not long in hearing news of the body of adventurers which had taken possession of the castle on the hill. Every peasant that they met with when day dawned gave them some tidings of a detachment from the famous company of Sir Robert Knowles who had lately established themselves in the neighbourhood, and laid the country under contribution as far as Mans and La Flèche. None, indeed, could give any information regarding the exact fate of the Lady Adela; but some had heard a troop of horse pass their cottages during the night; and the two noblemen were so thoroughly convinced that the lady had fallen into the hands of these adventurers, that after giving their horses a few hours' rest at the first village they could find, they marched on, guided by some of the peasantry, and only halted at length in order to send back messengers to Mauvinet, with directions to call forth every retainer of the house, and bring them to a certain spot by daybreak on the following morning.

Some consultation was held as to whether it would be better to send a summons requiring the marauders in the castle to give up their prisoners, or to proceed at once by force. But the captal strongly urged the necessity of giving no intimation of their purpose to the adventurers till the last moment; and the count yielded, although his deep anxiety for his child made him desirous of taking the most speedy means that could be adopted for bringing her captivity to an end. No rest or sleep was his portion during the night, though he adopted the best measures that circumstances permitted him to use for refreshing his men and horses against the following day.

The captal, on his part, not forgetting the vow that he had made, entered his house, but laid himself down in the open fields with his men around him and his naked sword by his side. An hour before daylight the two leaders met to consult

together upon their after proceedings; and before they separated several bands of the retainers of the house of Mauvinet came in, and reported that others were following hard behind. The whole country, they said, was rising in indignation and alarm; and several of the vassals of other noble houses in the neighbourhood were found to have joined themselves to the troops of the Lord of Mauvinet; so that an overpowering force might soon be expected, ready to act at once against the adventurers.

After a short conference, the Captal de Buch proposed to his friend to go forward with his men and reconnoitre the enemy's position, while the count himself remained behind to collect the various bands as they came up. The captal promised to return before day had dawned more than half-an-hour; and his proposal being agreed to, he set out at once, accompanied by the troop of twenty or five-and-twenty men which had followed him to Mauvinet.

It was somewhat later than the hour he had specified, ere he did indeed return; but then he came with a smiling countenance, assuring the count that the place was one of no great strength and could not make any formidable resistance. The array which presented itself to his eyes on rejoining the count seemed to warrant the expectation of speedy success; for more than four hundred men were now in the field, volunteers were coming in every moment, and various implements for assaulting the castle had already been provided. No farther delay took place: the troops were instantly put in motion; and the Lord of Mauvinet and his friend led the way a few hundred yards in advance, at the head of a small body of chosen men.

The whole aspect of the scene, as they approached the castle, seemed to show that the free companions had not the slightest idea of being attacked; and in passing through a small hollow way at about a mile's distance from the fortress, the count and his companions came suddenly upon an armed man, riding on with the utmost tranquillity. The space between him and them when he first appeared was not more than forty or fifty yards, and reining up his horse quickly, he seemed about to fly; but perceiving levelled lances and preparations for instant pursuit, he laid down his bridle and halted, waiting till they came up. His appearance left no doubt of his being one of the adventurers; and he was instantly surrounded by the men of Mauvinet, who perhaps might have treated him ill had it not been for the interference of the captal; for the Lord of Mauvinet himself was too much

enraged to respect the character of soldiers in so lawless a body of marauders.

"Nay, nay, count," said the captal, seeing the fierce look which the father of Adela bent upon the prisoner: "remember these are all good men-at-arms, most of them gentlemen by birth; and the unhappy license of the times has justified things that in other days were unjustifiable."

"I shall ever give heed to your voice, my noble friend," replied the Lord of Mauvinet, "when it is raised in a righteous cause; but you will not expect me to spare men who, without the warrant of actual war, do acts that actual war itself has never sanctioned: carry off women and children from their parents, and wage dishonest hostilities in time of truce against the innocent and unoffending. The slaughter of my peasantry was enough, but the outrage offered to my child leaves no room for mercy or forbearance; and a short shrift and a neighbouring tree are all the lenity that I can show."

"Yet listen, my good lord," rejoined the captal: "this man may, perhaps, if you grant him pardon, give us some good information regarding the enemy. Hark, fellow! you look wondrous pale for one who has chosen so perilous a trade. Stand forward, and try, by answering truly, to save your life. You come from the Castle of La Trie aux Bois—is it not so?"

"Yes, noble sir," replied the man, who evidently did not like the aspect of death in the shape which it now assumed; "but I have only been there three days, and have had no share in what has been done there."

"How came you to go thither at all?" demanded the captal.

"I carried letters, noble sir," answered the man, "from good Sir Robert Knowles to worthy Captain Griffith."

"Ha! my old companion Knowles!" cried the captal; "is he come so near? And Griffith too! he is a good soldier, if ever man was. Nor is he discourteous either. The Lady Adela will suffer no wrong at his hands. I should like well to try twelve strokes of a good sword with him, and will, please heaven, ere the world be three hours older."

"Ah! sir, you reckon ill," rejoined the adventurer: "he left the castle this morning in the grey, with a score of lances, to confer with good Sir Robert; nor will he return till to-morrow at noon. They say there is some difference between them, but I know not."

"And whither were you going now?" asked the count,

who had hitherto remained silent. "You seemed in great haste."

"I was carrying a letter, noble sir," replied the man.

"What! another letter?" exclaimed the Captal de Buch.

"By your leave, Sir Letter-carrier, we will see this epistle."

"It is directed to the noble Lord of Mauvinet," replied the adventurer, "and is written by the lady they took yesterday."

"Then give it to me instantly," exclaimed the count: "quick, fellow! quick! or we will take it in a way that may be somewhat more speedy."

The prisoner, whose senses were so far confused that he did not yet understand that one of the personages who spoke to him was the very nobleman to whom the letter was addressed, gave it up with evident reluctance; and, first kissing the handwriting of his beloved child, the count tore it open and read. The captal watched his countenance narrowly, and saw with no small delight that the brow of Adela's father grew brighter, and that a look of relief came over his whole face.

"She is well, thanks be to God!" exclaimed the count, turning to his friend. "She is well, and they have used her with all respect and courtesy; but tell me, my good lord captal, did ever mortal man hear such insolence as this? They come hither into the heart of the land, carry off our children, and boldly put them to ransom, as if there were a war proclaimed against babes and ladies. They ask a thousand crowns of gold, and bid me ransom my daughter at once, as if she were a knight captured in fair fight. By St. Maurice, this is too much!"

"Do they mention the villain who carried her off?" demanded the captal: "it would seem they have taken her out of his hands."

"They neither mention him nor my poor boy Albert," replied the count. "Of the one I will have signal vengeance, and for the safety of the other good account. That youth is like a son to me, captal, and I will reckon severely with that man who does him wrong. But let us march on, and by the way, speak of this ransoming. What say you? should I give it?"

"No, my good lord, no," replied the captal. "I can feel that you are anxious for your daughter; but they dare not—it is impossible—they dare not injure her, I am sure. My oath is that I will set her free, and of course that oath implies by force of arms. It I must keep; and I will answer for it

that the lady shall suffer no wrong, although these men perchance may threaten it. Let us march on, my lord; and bringing this man along with us, use him for what purposes we may think fit hereafter."

As was very natural, the Lord of Mauvinet could hardly, in his anxiety for his daughter, feel satisfied with the assurance of the captal; but still, as is often the case with all men, he would not show the weakness that he felt, and agreed to the proposal of his friend, though he would fain have yielded to the demand of ransom, however unreasonable, and secured his child's safety before he sought vengeance for the insult that had been offered to him.

Marching on, then, they soon came within sight of the castle; but as they rode forward, upon a rising ground which looked down upon it, the count observed a small party of horsemen coming up at some distance, nearly on a parallel line with his own forces.

"Who are these?" he exclaimed, speaking to the captal—"who are these, my good lord? We had better send out to cut them off."

"No, no," replied the captal, smiling; "they are my own men. I thought it best, when I returned to you just now, to leave a party upon that road, both to bring us any intelligence and to cut off the enemy, should they think fit to send out for aid in that direction. My people will come up against the other side of the castle, and make all sure there."

"Well bethought, well bethought, my noble friend," replied the count: "we will teach those hardy plunderers another tale. Bring that fellow hither from behind; and let Bertrand, with the men from the abbey, sweep round to the right while we advance against the barbican. Now, noble captal, where will you command?"

"Upon the left, my good lord," answered the captal. "Methinks I will attack the wall near yon square tower: it is there, most likely, that they have lodged the lady, and I would fain have it that no other hand than mine set her free."

"But the wall seems strong and high there," replied the Lord of Mauvinet.

"The more the honour of scaling it," said the captal with a laugh. "We must show them what the chivalry of France and England can do when united. Let us ride on together, however; but first send on this fellow to summon them to set the lady free, and then we will act as we may find needful."

The capital's plan was followed; the troops of Mauvinet advanced in somewhat *irregular order*, if such an expression may be permitted; for the best arrayed feudal armies of that day seldom presented any very great appearance of discipline; and troops so hastily called together as those now before the castle could not be expected to equal a long-organised force. They made a gallant show, however, as they came up with their armour shining in the sun and their pennons fluttering in the breeze, while the castle, which when they first approached it had appeared almost entirely deserted, with nothing but two soldiers pacing upon the walls, and a few men loitering about the gate of the barbican, suddenly displayed an aspect of far greater bustle and activity. Soldiers were seen running here and there, the drawbridge was suddenly drawn up, the portcullis let fall, the walls became strongly manned, and all the bustle and agitation of a place suddenly and unexpectedly attacked showed itself in the fortress.

At the distance of an arrow's flight from the barbican the count and the capital paused upon a little mound, and for a few moments gazed upon the active scene before them. The prisoner was then called up, and the count informed him that he spared his life upon the condition that he should go into the castle and bear the message with which he was about to charge him.

"Tell them," he said, "that I have come to punish them for their unheard-of insolence, in daring to carry off my child almost from my very side, and for discourtesy and unknighly baseness in tearing a lady from her home and demanding a ransom for her liberty. Bid them, if they would escape my utmost vengeance, instantly set free the Lady Adela de Mauvinet; bid them surrender to me, tied hand and foot, the villain named William Caillet, who dared to carry her off; and also bid them send back to me or give a good account of the youth named Albert Denyn, who, I have reason to believe, has fallen into their power. Go, and bring me back a speedy answer."

The man hesitated before he departed, and even when he had taken two or three steps came back and said—

"I am afraid, my noble lord, they will not suffer me to return."

"You had better find means to return," said the capital sternly; "for be perfectly assured, my friend, that within one hour from this time I will speak with you in that castle, if you are not here before; and what I say then will not please you. I mean, fellow, that your life shall answer for your disobe-

dience; and that if you are not here ere our trumpets sound to the attack, it were better for you to seek a priest quickly, for you will have short time for shrift."

The tone in which the captal spoke was as significant as his words, and the man went away somewhat pale in the face.

"The villain ought to be hanged for his cowardice," said the captal. "He is one of those who hang upon the skirts of braver rascals than himself, finding just sufficient valour in a multitude of companions to carry him through a general battle. We will give them some ten minutes, my lord, to send their answer. I have despatched two or three of my people down to the village that we passed on the right to seek some of their masons' ladders. We must contrive to join two together to reach that wall, and even then we shall have some difficulty."

"Better by far," said the count, "join your efforts to mine, my lord, and force our way in together at the gate: I fear you will make no impression on the wall."

"Will you bet me a Barbary horse," said the captal, laughingly, "that I am not in before you, my lord? But see! my men are already making preparations; and, as I live, here comes our messenger again! He has had a speedy answer."

The man approached slowly, and evidently with trepidation, which the looks of the captal and the count were not well calculated to remove.

"Well, fellow," exclaimed the Lord of Mauvinet ere he reached them, "what is the reply?"

"I dare not give it you, my lord," said the man—"I dare not give it you unless you promise me your pardon."

"Well, well, you shall be pardoned," joined in the captal; "and if my Lord of Mauvinet follows my advice, he will shave your head and thrust you into a monastery."

"Speak, man! speak!" cried the count, "or by heaven I will thrust my sword through thee."

"Well, then, my lord," replied the messenger, "though I beseech your forgiveness for speaking it, the Captain Maillot, who now commands in the absence of the Welshman, bade me give you this answer at once:—That as to William Caillet, he knows nothing of him; that as for Albert Denyn, you may seek him where you will find him; and that as for the Lady Adela, she shall not have her liberty unless you pay the thousand crowns demanded."

"Courteous, modest, and reasonable!" said the captal; "but what more, my friend? what more? I see there is something more under that white face."

"It must be told," said the man, with a sigh; "and it is this:—He bade me say to the count, that the safety of his daughter depends upon his withdrawing his banner instantly from before those walls. He spoke it in harder terms than I dare name, and I believe he will keep his word." •

The count gazed with a countenance of anguish and anxiety in the face of the captal, struggling between apprehension for his child and the consciousness that his honour as a knight was pledged to resent the insult offered to him. The face of the captal gave him no relief, though it was certainly much calmer than he expected to see it; yet there was a heavy frown upon that leader's brow, which spoke at once the determination that the count feared they must both take.

"My lord," said the captal, after a moment's pause, "your situation is painful; but yield not, I beseech you, to apprehension. In truth, there is nothing to fear. Again I pledge myself that there shall no harm happen. However, do you as you like: my answer I will send to these men myself. Go back to them," he continued, turning to the messenger—"go back to them, and say that the Captal de Buch has pledged himself to set free the Lady Adela de Mauvinet; that he will not only set her free, but punish them who keep her; and that he vows by his faith and honour as a Christian knight, if he find that insult or injury of any kind has been offered to the lady, that not contented with putting every man he finds within the castle to the sword, he will hang Maillot and twelve of his companions by their feet from the walls of the castle, till death deliver them or the ravens eat them living. Go tell them that I swear this on my honour and on my faith: now let me see what they dare do. Give me my casque! What! you are afraid? Well, poor fool! I will go myself. My Lord of Mauvinet, I beseech you prepare all means for instant attack. I see they have brought up the ladders there to my men. The instant I have given my message, I will ride round and scale the walls. You, at the same moment, force your way in here while others attack at different points. They cannot long hold out against such a force as we have here: it is a place of no strength—a mere cottage. Be of good cheer, my lord; be of good cheer—no harm shall happen." •

The count shook his head mournfully, saying, "We must do what our honour requires, lord captal: God give us a good issue." •

"Fear not, fear not," exclaimed the captal, who had by this time put on his casque; and thus saying, he galloped forward

with the two or three men whom he had kept with him, approaching the barbican, the wall of which at this moment was covered with men-at-arms.

When the capital was about forty or fifty yards from that outwork, the count and those who stood beside him perceived the adventurers bend their bows, and in a moment several arrows fell around the capital.

The Lord of Mauvinet's indignation was roused more vehemently than ever; and, waving his hand to his followers, he exclaimed, "On, on to the barbican! A purse of gold and knighthood for the first man who crosses the bridge!"

The retainers of Mauvinet were in movement in a moment; and, dashing on towards the gates, they arrived just as the capital was once more turning away, shaking his fist fiercely towards the men upon the walls. His visor was up, and they could see that he had been slightly wounded in the face, but countenance was all courage, and even gaiety; and he waved his hand to the count, crying—

"On, on, my lord!" whilst he himself galloped round towards the point of attack he had chosen.

The enemy sent a flight of arrows after him, but their attention was soon called in another direction; for the men of Mauvinet, rushing forward, soon reached the foot of the barbican; and so fiercely did they ply the axe and hammer, that in a few minutes, notwithstanding all the shouts and cries that echoed around, the crashing sound of large masses of wood torn off from the gate, and the giving way of the iron-work within in several places, showed the besieged that the outwork could not be maintained any longer.

As soon as they perceived that such was the case, they made signs at once to their companions on the other side of the moat to let down the drawbridge; and a general rush took place amongst the soldiery in the barbican to make their escape. Ere they could all pass, however, the gate which had been attacked gave way at once with a tremendous crash; the troops of Mauvinet rushed in; and before the bridge could be raised, several of those upon it were thrown over into the moat; and a number of assailants, rushing across, with repeated blows of their axes cut through the wood-work where the chains were fastened, and the pont-levis, which was slowly rising, fell again with great force.

The portcullis, however, was down, the gates were closed, and the walls above covered with archers; but the barbican served the Count de Mauvinet as a fort; and while a number of his men plied the bars of the portcullis with blows of the

axe, others with crossbows kept up an answering discharge against those upon the battlements.

In an instant afterwards, however, the Lord of Mauvinet suddenly cried, "Stop, stop, every man of you!" and all eyes, turning to the gallery above the gate, beheld a man-at-arms dragging forth Adela by the hand to the very spot to which all the bolts were directed.

CHAPTER XV.

THE moment that the man who held Adela by the arm saw that the flight of quarrels and arrows had ceased, he threw up the visor of his casque, exposing to view the fierce and dogged countenance of the person called Maillot. By his gestures he was evidently speaking aloud; but for a moment or two the noise and confusion, both on the battlements and under the walls, prevented one word that he uttered from being heard.

The Lord of Mauvinet eagerly waved his hand, however, exclaiming, "Silence, silence! Hear what he says! Not a word, upon your lives!"

A sudden pause instantly succeeded; and the contrast was strange, when, after that scene of strife and confusion, and shouts and outcries, a deep stillness suddenly fell over the whole scene, and a robin, unscared by all that had preceded, was heard singing in a willow-tree by the side of the moat.

"Mark!" cried Maillot, rolling his fierce eyes over the party that stood under the barbican and upon the bridge; "mark, and take warning, every man of you! Another bolt from a cross-bow shot against this castle, another blow from an axe struck against that gate, and I cast her headlong down! I know how to deal with you, Lord of Mauvinet! You now know how to have your daughter without ransom. If you like her better dead than living, bend your bows. If not, draw off your men, for I am in no mood for jesting."

The heart of the Lord of Mauvinet burnt within him. To be foiled by a pitiful band of adventurers in an attack on so poor a place was a disgrace which no knightly heart could well endure; and yet to risk his daughter's life, or by his own act to see her slain before his face, was what could scarcely be expected of a father.

"Villain!" he cried, after looking round his people for a moment, as if seeking counsel; "villain! you triumph now:

but the time will come when I will have vengeance, and bitter shall that vengeance be!"

"Vengeance!" shouted Maillot at the top of his voice. "Vengeance, by the Lord! If such be your purpose, let your vengeance come now! I will have mine first;" and at the same moment he seized Adela with a lighter grasp, and dragged her a step forward, as if to cast her over the battlements.

The poor girl's shrieks rent the air; and though many a bow was drawn by the party below, no one durst shoot at the murderous villain for fear of striking the object of his cruelty. The Lord of Mauvinet, with his eye fixed upon him, stretched out his hand for a crossbow, resolved to risk all to save her from the terrible death that menaced her; but in the midst of that moment of horror there came a loud cry from the angle of the wall close to Maillot, and the savage paused, turning his head to the side from which the sounds proceeded.

In an instant two soldiers who stood beside him were dashed to the ground; and before he or those who were below could well see what was coming, with a spring like that of a tiger the Captal de Buch was upon him; and, wrenching his grasp from Adela, who sank fainting upon the ground, the knight clasped the brutal plunderer in his powerful arms, and a terrible though momentary struggle took place between them, while the swords of Albert Denyn and a number of the captal's followers kept the space around clear of the adventurers, who hurried boldly up to the defence of their companion.

"Now, wretch! now!" exclaimed the captal, dragging the marauder forward to the edge of the battlement, in spite of his resistance—"now you shall taste the same fate yourself that you destined for another!"

The man, finding himself mastered, clung to the captal with the strength both of despair and rage, determined to drag him over the low coping, if he were forced to try the terrible leap himself. Still the captal drew him on to the very edge, lifting him in his athletic arms to cast him over, while Maillot twined around him for life and vengeance; and twice they struggled together fiercely, the one to retain his grasp, the other to cast it off. At length, however, the knight, as if wearied with the strife, and resolved to slay his adversary with the sword, relaxed his hold, and Maillot suddenly drew back from his fierce embrace; but the instant he did so, the captal, without drawing his sword, smote him in the face with his gauntleted hand, and the man fell prostrate before him.

Like lightning the knight caught him again in his arms, swung him high above the parapet, and ere he could resume his grasp, pitched over into mid-air, with a scream of terror bursting from his lips. The unhappy wretch fell first upon the chain of the drawbridge, and a gush of blood upon the planks showed the terrible force of his descent. He then rolled over with a deep groan, and plunged into the moat, sinking at once to the bottom, and, encumbered with his armour, never rising again.

"On, on, my Lord of Mauvinet!" shouted the capital, waving his hand to the count and drawing his sword. "Your child is safe, and we will soon open the gates for you. The dogs have had their day, but it is over now!"

Thus saying, he gently raised Adela from the ground; and though he dared not at that moment pause to call her back to recollection, he placed her safely in an angle of the wall, with her head leaning upon the battlements, while he hastened to head his men in the fierce contention which they were waging around him with the rest of the adventurers. The capital's troop, indeed, was much outnumbered by the men within the castle; but the attack upon the gate had been renewed by the Lord of Mauvinet and his party; and scattered, confused, and disheartened, at finding the enemy within their walls, the free companions offered an ill-conducted but desperate resistance. Albert Denyn and the rest were already driving them on towards the court, when the capital again took the lead, and his greater military skill and experience at once taught him to act upon a different plan.

"To the gate, Albert! to the gate!" he cried: "always keep open your communication with your own friends. Ten of you hold firm the way up to the platform; Albert and the rest follow me. This way must lead to the gate;" and rushing on at full speed, he soon turned the angle of the court, where a considerable body of the marauders were defending the entrance against the troops of Mauvinet.

The attack upon their rear at once put them into confusion; and while a terrible slaughter took place amongst them, two or three of the capital's men forced their way on till they reached the chains of the gate and drew up the portcullis. The troops of Mauvinet rushed in, and in a moment the castle was gained; while the adventurers, flying from court to court, for some time received little quarter from their enraged enemies.

When Adela opened her eyes and raised her head from the stone against which it lay, she found herself quite alone,

though the confused sounds which met her ears on every side, the clang of arms, the shouts, the cries, the screams, recalled painfully to her mind all the terrible circumstances of her situation, and showed her that the strife was still going on. She sat up and listened, with an aching brow and a palpitating heart; but the noise seemed to diminish, and come from a greater distance, and then a loud shout and some laughter, mingling with the sadder sounds, announced that some party had won the day.

With fear and hope struggling together, Adela raised herself faintly from the ground and gazed over the country from the battlements. The multitude which had appeared before the walls when last her terrified eyes had been turned to the slope before the castle, looking for help and consolation in her deadly terror, and finding none, had now totally disappeared. A few men were seen in the barbican, a few standing inactive upon the bridge; but with joy inexpressible Adela recognised the colours of the house of Mauvinet amongst them, and in a moment after, some rapid steps were heard approaching.

It was more with hope than fear that the heart of Adela beat now, and supporting herself by the wall, she gazed eagerly forward till those who approached had turned the angle of the wall, and she beheld the form of the Capital de Buch, followed by two or three of her father's attendants. A sudden terror then took possession of her regarding her father, and she exclaimed, "My father! my lord capital, where is my father?"

"He is not hurt! No, dear lady, no," exclaimed the capital—"he is not hurt; and, thanks be to heaven! very few are so but those who themselves deserved to suffer for their baseness. I have outrun your father, and come hither to seek you and bring you to him. He is even now in the castle hall, caring for the wounded. The fierceness of the strife is over; those who still resist are not many, and doubtless they will be received to mercy if they will yield."

"Oh! show them mercy, my lord capital!" cried Adela eagerly; "we should not be cruel because they have been so."

"Come, then, lady, and plead for them yourself," said the capital. "The whole body will soon be in your father's presence. Lean upon my arm, for I see you are faint and weak; but I trust you will soon be well again, now that this sad day's business is so happily accomplished. These are thunder-showers, lady, that beat down the flowers; but the flowers raise their heads refreshed when the storm is over."

Adela leant upon the captal's arm as he desired her, for she could not in courtesy refuse; but, to say truth, she would more willingly have gone alone, although of the two things which alone remained upon her memory concerning her deliverance from the grasp of Maillot, the more prominent was, that it was the captal who had come to her aid.

The other recollection that came back to her mind was a faint image of Albert Denyn, sword in hand, amongst a fierce troop of the adventurers; and she would fain have inquired for him—she would fain have asked if he was hurt; but her lips refused to pronounce his name, and she suffered the captal to lead her on in silence. A few steps brought them down a gentle slope which led from the platform above the gate into the outer court, and Adela shuddered and shut her eyes, as she was obliged to choose her steps amongst the dead that lay opposite the entrance, and the pools of blood which had collected round them.

"The struggle was fierce here," said the captal, feeling her hand tremble as he led her on: "the inner court is clearer, however. Morvix," he continued, speaking to one of the men who followed him, "let those bodies be looked to; there may be some of the poor wretches not dead yet. That man's arm moved as we passed—his with the red feather."

Thus saying, he led Adela onward up the steps to the door of the great hall, from which issued forth the sounds of many voices. It was a large vaulted chamber, full fifty feet in length; but it appeared at that moment so crowded by different groups of followers attached to the house of Mauvinet, that at first Adela could not see to the other end; but the towering height of the captal gave him a view over the heads of the rest.

"There is your father," he said: "the strife is all over now, it seems." But at the same moment some of those who were near the door turned their eyes upon the lady, and one or two voices pronounced, "The Lady Adela!"

All the retainers hastened to make way for her; while the count sprang forward from the other end of the hall, and casting away his bloody sword, clasped her tenderly to his bosom.

Father and child both wept for several moments in silence, while the armed men with whom the hall was filled formed a circle around; and Albert Denyn, who had raised the count's sword, stood a step behind him, with a cheek pale with emotion and eyes bent upon the ground.

The count had not recovered himself enough to speak to

any one, when from the other side of the hall a group of several persons entered, amongst whom were six or seven men with their hands tied, with four women and an infant.

"Oh, my father!" exclaimed Adela, "spare them! spare them them kindly, for well and kindly have they treated me. Weep not, lady," she continued, advancing to one of the women and taking her hand. "my father will show you all country for my sake, I am sure."

"I war not with women and children," said the count, speaking to the wife of Griffith: "I leave that to those who have cast off the character of soldiers and of men, to assume the habits of savage beasts. Madam, you shall be kindly dealt with and sent in safety whithersoever you wish to go. Lead the lady and her women away, Montel, and with ten of the freshest horses guide her safely to whatever town she thinks fit to name. Be quick!" he added in a lower tone; "for as she has held companionship with the men around, she may feel it bitter to witness what is in store for them. Away!"

The old officer he spoke to conducted the wife of Griffith and her companions from the hall; and the count, as soon as they were gone, turned with a frowning brow to the men who had been brought in, saying to one of his own people that stood near, "They have been fairly chosen by lot from amongst the prisoners?"

"They have, my lord," replied the man; "they drew the lots themselves."

"Now, then," continued the count sternly, "before I doom you to the death you have all deserved, answer me these questions: first, by what authority you wage war here in France in time of truce?"

"By my own," replied one of the men, boldly. "Come, come, sir: there is not much to be said upon the matter. We have fought you, and you have fought us. You have won the day, and can do with us what you will. Hang us if you please, but do not keep us standing here talking about it. What signifies it to any one whether King Edward, or King John, or king anybody else, told me to make war in France, so that wars be made?"

"It signifies to you, my friend," replied the count, "for it makes you a lawful soldier or a lawless plunderer: it renders you an honourable prisoner or a captured robber, and ensures your safety, or leads you to a halter."

"Good faith, then," cried the man, "I fancy it must be the halter; for I made war of my own hand, knowing what I was

about, and so am quite ready. However, no one can say I have used him ill. I have never butchered a prisoner, or injured a woman, or offered wrong to a lady; and had it been my day to command, all this would not have happened."

"My noble lord," said Albert Denyn, taking a step forward, with his countenance glowing at the task of interfering with his lord's judgment, "when I was a prisoner in these men's hands, and the scoundrel Maillot sought to put me to death, this person raised his voice in my behalf and aided to save me."

"So, my boy, thou wert a prisoner with them?" said the count. "Well, then, his life shall be given for yours. Set him apart, Magnon."

"Not without the rest!" cried the captive. "All fair, my good lord! I drew my lot with them, and their fate I will share, be it what it may. I thank thee, good youth: thou art a noble lad and wilt be a good soldier; but I won't part company with my friends here, though it be at the gallows-foot."

"Thou art a good fellow thyself," exclaimed the captal. "I pray you, count, spare these men. I vowed I would have vengeance for any wrong done to the lady, and the man who it seems was the chief offender has met with punishment, as you know. Speak, dear lady; did you receive any injury?"

"None!" replied Adela eagerly. "They treated me, my dear father, with all kindness and courtesy till the castle was attacked, and then that fearful man came and dragged me to the battlements. Spare them! Oh! I entreat you, my father, put them not to death! Consider how cruelly they might have used me had they been so disposed."

"Nay, nay, my lord," said the captal, "let us show mercy to those that remain. Some seventy have been slain, it seems; and as I know that it is your wish to free Touraine from these plunderers, keep them in prison, or let those who will take service in my band; for I am bound upon a long journey in arms and need tried men. Come, my dear lord—for my share in this day's fight you shall give me the guerdon of the prisoners' lives."

"I give them to you willingly, lord captal," cried the count, turning and grasping his hand; "not as your guerdon for such high deeds as you have done this day, but out of love and friendship for so noble a knight. For your aid I have a better recompense. Let the hall be cleared! Stay, Albert—stay, Chassain—and you, too, Delbas: let the rest leave us."

The cheek of Adela grew as pale as death with a presentiment of the coming of a painful moment. Albert Denyn, with a quivering lip, fixed his eyes upon the ground, scarcely daring to raise them, while the receding feet of the soldiery told that the hall was not yet clear. When all was becoming more still, however, he gave a momentary glance at the face of the captal. It too was pale; and as he laid aside his casque and pressed his hand upon his brow, Albert thought he saw tokens of strong emotion on that noble countenance.

"My dear and gallant friend," said the count, turning to the knight as soon as the hall was clear, "to you and to your courage alone do I owe the safety of my beloved child, without the loss of my own honour and renown, by basely yielding to the demands of these lawless men. What reward can I offer you? what, in other words, can I refuse you after this? Forget, my lord captal, all that passed two mornings ago, except that you asked my daughter's hand, and believe that I then gave it to you. Take it, my lord, for I know no man in France so well calculated to defend, protect, and ensure her honour. Take her, my lord, for I am sure that you will make her happy."

Adela's countenance was as pale as death, and her knees shook beneath her. Albert Denyn remained with his teeth hard set, his eyes fixed upon the pavement, and his hand so tightly clenched upon the count's sword, which he had raised from the ground and still held, that the fingers sank into the velvet with which the hilt was covered. The Captal de Buch, on his part, looked grave and even sad, though he stood beside the count with his lofty person raised to its full height, and his brow calm, though somewhat stern. For a moment he kept silence, bending his look upon Adela, and seeming to strive for an insight into the feelings of her heart at that moment. He remained so long without making any reply that the count turned towards him with some surprise; and the captal, as if satisfied in regard to the subject of his contemplation, lifted his eyes from the countenance of poor Adela de Mauvinet, and raised them for an instant towards heaven.

"Pardon, my lord count," he said, "that I have not yet thanked you for your generous kindness as I ought. Now let me thank you most truly, most sincerely: you know that the precious gift you offer me can be esteemed by no man living more than myself. You know how ardently I coveted it—how earnestly I asked it—how bitter was my disappointment when you showed me that I ought not to expect it; that as an English subject, and long an enemy in arms against

France, I ought not to aspire to the hand of a French lady, whatever other claims I might have. I have felt the disappointment most bitterly—I feel it still; I still love this lady truly and well; I know that none other will ever hold my heart as she does. But, my lord, I cannot take advantage of your generous offer; and what you refused me on just and noble grounds I cannot now accept simply because I have done my mere duty and fulfilled my oath as a knight."

The count gazed in his face for a moment with a look both of inquiry and surprise, and then replied abruptly, "Capal, there is some other motive. Can it be that you are offended at my first reply?"

"Oh, no, upon my life!" exclaimed the capal: "you gave the noblest and the best of reasons for your conduct, and I should be weak indeed, my friend, if I did not feel that you are right."

"Still, capal," exclaimed the count, "still I see there is some other motive. I adjure you on your honour, tell me, is there not?"

The capal turned his eyes from the death-like countenance of Adela to the sad but resolute countenance of Albert Denyn, and then replied, "Thus adjured, my lord, I must acknowledge that there is."

"Then I beseech you, in friendship and in honour, name it," exclaimed the count.

The capal hesitated for an instant, but the moment after answered in a freer tone than he had yet used, though with a somewhat melancholy smile, "I will not refuse to tell you my motive, my good lord," he said, "although it go somewhat against my own vanity to speak it. The cause is this, my lord—that with all the attention, and care, and such means as gentlemen employ to win fair ladies' hearts, I have not succeeded in gaining that of this dear lady here. I had hoped that it might be otherwise; but from what I have seen this day—nay, this very moment—I am convinced, even against all the whisperings of pride and vanity, that my suit is not successful with her whose happiness I am bound to prize even more than my own."

"Nay, nay," exclaimed the count, "you are mistaken, my good lord: Adela turned somewhat pale, it is true; but think what she has gone through this day! Besides, so young a creature hears not such things without emotion. Speak, Adela; speak yourself; and if, as is the way with woman, you will not say that you can love, tell the noble capal, at least, that it was but a passing beating of your heart that took the colour from your face just now."

"I dare not, my dear father," replied the lady, in tones scarcely audible; "I dare not. Far be it from me to resist your will, or to oppose your wishes even by a word; but still when you ask me I must speak the truth. The capital has read my feelings aright. As the dearest, the noblest, the best of friends, I shall always regard him; but I cannot love him as he deserves to be loved."

"Such love will come! such love will come!" exclaimed the count.

"Nay, nay, my good lord," said the capital; "my pride now takes arms: I must be loved entirely by my wife—and henceforth I withdraw my suit. Pardon me, lady, if I have given you pain; and let me still assure you, that if ever the time should come, which God forbid, when you should want protection from any other arm than that of your noble father, no knight in Europe will so willingly draw the sword in your defence as he who has done so this day. To-morrow, God willing, he will leave the Castle of Mauvinet, and try in other lands to forget—not that he has seen you—not that he has loved—but that he has ever loved you too well for his own happiness. Do you forget it likewise, for the few short hours that he has yet to stay. Look on him only as a valued friend who is soon to quit you, and so let the time pass as gaily as it may."

The Count de Mauvinet turned and grasped the capital's hand, with a look in which there was some sorrow mixed strangely with other feelings. To unite his daughter with the capital, or indeed with any one who could ever become an enemy to France, was in itself painful to him, however much he might love and esteem the person; and though, in his gratitude for the rescue of his daughter, he had offered, and really wished, to give that which in his eyes was the best gift that man could bestow or receive, there was a sensation of relief mingled with a certain sort of disappointment, which rendered his feelings somewhat strange and contradictory.

"Then, my lord," he said, "as you refuse the gift I offer you, what recompense can I make you? for some token of gratitude you must accept. To you, and to you alone, I owe the safety of my beloved child: that deed must not go without its guerdon."

"Nay, count," replied the capital, "you mistake: it is not to me you owe the lady's safety. Though I have had some share, others have had a greater; and indeed to this good youth here, Albert Denyn, are you truly indebted for the deliverance of your daughter, without that compromise of your own honour which you would have felt and regretted for

many a long day, if you had yielded to the unjust demands of these base men. To him, I say, more than to any other, is the safety of the Lady Adela owing."

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed the Lady Adela eagerly, but with a countenance into which the blood came quickly while she spoke. "He would have freed me long before, too, had it not been for my own weak fears in regard to crossing the moat, over which he offered to carry me."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the count: "I do not understand this, captal! I saw you with my own eyes——"

"True, my lord," replied the captal; "but who was it led me by the path which enabled me to free the lady? But my part of the tale is soon told—Albert himself must relate to you the rest. While lying out in the fields this morning with my men, two of them suddenly came upon some one whom they seized, thinking him one of the companions from the castle, and brought him to me. His joy at finding me I shall not easily forget. He pressed me eagerly to go at once to the deliverance of the Lady Adela, assuring me that he could guide me by a way which would put the castle in my power without delay. From the numbers, however, that I found were within the place, I judged that we might risk the safety of the Lady Adela herself if we ventured to attack the castle without your aid. Resolved, however, to have the honour of the enterprise as far as possible, I kept to myself the knowledge I had gained, sent on Albert with some of my men to wait till the whole forces of Mauvinet could come up, and then left you, as you know, to assail another side of the castle. Albert led us without mistake to the spot where a small postern gate opened upon the moat; and he was the first to plunge into the water, under the arrows of those who were upon the walls. We followed one by one, and through dark and difficult passages he guided us with certainty to a chamber which had lately been tenanted by the Lady Adela. She was no longer in it, however, having been dragged by that villain Maillot to the walls; but we found a poor woman there in her place, who first by her cries alarmed some of the adventurers, but afterwards did us good service by telling us where we should find the lady and leading us partly on the way. We were soon obliged to betake us to our arms; for the woman's cries had brought men into the corridor, and thence we had to fight our way through till we reached the gallery above the gates. What happened then, my lord, you know: at least, as I saw you all gazing up while the wolf continued to struggle in my grasp, I doubt not that you did

see all that passed. What more remains to be said, my noble lord, is merely that from the first Albert led us well and truly; and also, when the strife came, he fought as gallantly as any man-at-arms I ever saw. So much so, in truth, and so well had he deserved, that for a moment I thought to leave him the whole adventure, and suffer him to deal with Maillot himself. Had the lady not been in danger, I would have done so. I hold it to be the part of a man of honour to suffer every one to accomplish an enterprise he has well begun. The lady was in peril, however, and I durst not do the good youth that justice. To say truth, I am now glad I did not; for the scoundrel was strong and valiant, and even gave me some trouble; and his well-knit limbs and long experience were too much for a youth, however brave. My tale is told, my lord: Albert and the lady herself have more to say; for by some means he found his way to the chamber where they had placed her, before making his escape, and offered even then, with every likelihood of success, to set her free himself."

The count held out his hand to Albert Denyn, saying, "How then shall I reward *you*, Albert? You lay up against me every day some heavy debt for gratitude to pay."

"Oh, no, my lord," replied Albert Denyn; "it is not so, indeed. I feel most deeply that all I can do is but little to show my thankfulness for all that you have done for me. Do not I owe you everything, my lord? From a period of infancy that I can no more recollect, have you not been all in all to me—more a father than a lord; a friend and not a master?"

"And well have you repaid me ever," replied the Lord of Mauvinet, "and daily do you repay me more and more for all that I have done; but for such services as this, any trifling kindness and favour that I may have shown you is little, and I must find some other means of recompensing the deliverer of my beloved child. You shall ask me some boon yourself when you have had time for thought, and I believe that it will be difficult for you to claim anything which I should be tempted to refuse."

As the count spoke, the Captal de Buch turned his keen glance towards Adela, whose countenance, when first his eyes rested on her, was pale with various emotions; but the moment her look met his, her face became flushed like the morning sky, and her eyes, which had been for some time turned to the face of her father, sought the ground, and were not raised again.

The captal mused for a moment with a brow slightly

clouded; but the moment after he smiled again, saying, "You have a long tale to hear, my lord. The Lady Adela, too, may well be faint and weary: let us prepare a litter for her as best we may, and all return to Mauvinet ere the day goes down. The sun has already passed the hour o' noon, though we were here at the dawning. Albert's history will cheer us over the fire to-night; and I will gladly spend the last day of my stay in Touraine within the hospitable walls where I have known no slight happiness."

"Be it so, my good lord; be it so," replied the count; "but let us seek some refreshment first: we are sure to find plenty of good wine and stores of all kinds in a free companion's castle. In the mean while, some of the men shall prepare the litter; and I will take such order here as to prevent this place ever becoming again a scourge to the country around."

An hour of actual employment succeeded, although, a conveyance for Adela having been found in the stables of the castle, less time would have sufficed for mere preparation. But the men of Mauvinet, although they had undertaken all the labour and peril of the expedition with willing hearts, in order to deliver their lord's daughter and revenge the insult offered to himself, were all disposed to seek in the stores of the adventurers some compensation for all the fatigue and danger they had undergone; and it was consequently with some trouble and delay that they were gathered together to depart. The Lord of Mauvinet, too, took means to execute his purpose in regard to dismantling the castle; and just as he and the captal were mounting their horses to ride away, the last touch was put to their triumph by the fall of a large part of the castle wall into the moat.

CHAPTER XVI.

THOSE were strange times to live in; and although human nature is ever the same, yet the aspect which it assumes is very different at different periods. In the present day, when order and law, established throughout all civilised lands, give security to life and property, and when violence and wrong are amongst those rare occurrences which excite the wonder of the countries where they take place, it is difficult to conceive how lightly were borne, even by those who suffered from them, deeds which now would set a whole world on fire, and spread terror and consternation through all hearts; how soon after the pressure of affliction and terror the mind recovered its elasticity, and gaiety and joy succeeded to sadness, to anger, or to apprehension.

Thus any who had beheld the scenes, such as we have described them, which took place in the morning, during the attack upon the stronghold of the adventurers, might have been much surprised to behold the picture presented by the Castle of Mauvinet on the evening of the same day. Mirth and joy reigned in the halls, and feasting and revelry presented themselves on all sides.

The retainers who had been gathered together for the delivery of the Lady Adela were now all regaled by the hospitality of her father; and though the sun was setting when the train, after a long and fatiguing march, once more came within sight of Mauvinet, yet before nine o'clock on the same night a supper had been prepared, which all those who partook of it declared to be excellent. Such was the continual state of preparation for profuse hospitality in which a feudal lord of those days was bound to hold himself, and such, we may also say, were the simple tastes and good digestion of our ancestors of the fourteenth century.

It was, of course, impossible that the whole of the men who had followed the Lord of Mauvinet back to his dwelling could be entertained in one chamber. Though many had returned to their homes, and a considerable body had been left in the hold of the adventurers, nearly two hundred were

feasted in various rooms on the ground-floor of the castle, while about half that number revelled in what was called the knights' hall. It was common in those days for all ranks to be mingled at one table on such occasions; but in the present case the numbers gave an excuse for a different and more convenient course. Beyond the knights' hall was a smaller one, where a table was spread for the count, the capital, and some twenty of the most distinguished guests; and at that table appeared, sitting by her father's side, Adela herself, pale, indeed, and bearing many marks of past agitation and alarm, but yet far more calm and tranquil than any one could have been whose thoughts had not been like hers—familiar all her life with battles, dangers, and disasters.

Erre she seated herself at her father's board, she had performed a task which her own heart, not less than the customs of the times, imposed upon her; and with grace which mingled timidity and self-possession, she went round from room to room, spoke with most of those who were present, and offered, in few but heartfelt words, her thanks for the deliverance to which all had more or less contributed.

At the same table with the count was also seated Albert Denyn, who in truth had proposed to himself to take a much more humble situation in one of the other chambers; but the count had called him to his side, bidding him seat himself in a place which had been reserved for him, and the youth without hesitation obeyed, as he would have obeyed any other order of his lord.

The capital looked down while the command was given, and asked himself in a low tone, as Albert took his seat, "What will be the end, I wonder?" A slight frown contracted his countenance, too, as he thus thought; and, to say truth, there was some bitterness in the feelings of his bosom at that moment. But his heart was naturally too generous and kind to suffer such sensations to hold it long; and the instant after he added, "Well, let honour and great deeds still have their due;" and he looked up with his face bright and clear again.

Not long after the meal had begun, the count drank to the capital, and sent round to him by the hands of his son, who served him with wine at the table, as was customary in those times, the large golden cup called the *hanap*. The capital drank some of the wine, and then, turning towards Albert Denyn, said, "To the best doer in this day's fight! It is not always, young man, that Fortune shows such favour as she has done to you this day. She has given you opportunities

such as many men long for in vain during a whole lifetime, and, to do you but justice, you have shown that you deserved them. Take round the cup to him, good youth."

The young lord carried him the cup; and Albert Denyn took it with a glowing cheek, bowing his head towards the capta, but scarcely touching the gold with his lip ere he returned it. The eyes of all men were upon him at that moment; but had they been turned towards Adela, they might have perceived that hers were filled with glistening moisture. The poor girl would fain have restrained the bright drop altogether, but she could do no more than prevent its passing from her eyelids.

The tone of her mind was much changed from what it had been in the morning. "Great occasions excite great energies; but after the dangers, and strifes, and anxieties have passed away, there comes a softness over the heart, a faint tranquillity, like the drowsiness succeeding long toil, when the vigour is relaxed, and tender things affect us more than all the harder and the harsher matters gone before. It was one of those moments with Adela, when she longed to have no eyes upon her, but to sit in the solitude of her own chamber and let the tears flow as they would.

The tears, however, which came against her will to the very brink of the fountain, were not unhappy ones: a load had been taken off her mind by more than one event which had occurred in the morning. She had no longer to fear the suit of the capta; she had no longer to apprehend that she would be obliged either to excite her father's anger by disobedience and opposition to his will, or doom herself to the long and agonising torture of marriage without love. She had obtained what she could scarcely have hoped to obtain—the opportunity of speaking openly a part at least of the feelings of her heart. Nor had her father expressed the least anger at the conduct she had pursued. He had sought her in her chamber to bring her to the hall, and Adela had felt some apprehension when she saw him appear; but his countenance wore the same look of affection that it had ever borne towards her, and the capta's name was never mentioned. Thus on all those points she was fully satisfied and her heart at rest. The immediate danger was gone, and the apprehensions which had weighed her heart down for some days had passed away, like one of those heavy clouds that are borne afar by the wind at the moment when they seem about to burst upon our heads. This was quite sufficient for Adela: indeed, few women require more under similar cir-

cumstances. She sought not to investigate deeply her own feelings; she would not ask herself what they were or whither they would lead her; she was afraid and unwilling to inquire into the future; and, happy in the present, she only feared that the bright dream which surrounded her, might vanish but too soon.

Such, however, was not the state of mind of Albert Denyn: he had been agitated by manifold feelings during the whole day, in the fight, on his way back, and after his return; and seldom indeed in the breast of any one have more contending emotions struggled at one time, or succeeded each other so rapidly. Terror and agitation on account of Adela had begun the morning; then came joy for her deliverance, almost hand in hand with all the fierce and angry passions excited in the struggle with the adventurers; a moment after, the delight of seeing her safe was mingled with grief and apprehension when her father offered her hand to the Captal de Buch; and such sensations gave way to a feeling of relief and gratitude when the words of the captal removed that source of anxiety for ever.

On his return home he had hastened to a chamber where he could be alone; and, in thanking God for all the successes of the day, he had mingled tears with the words of gratitude. But, unlike Adela, he was not satisfied with the present: he asked himself what the future was to be. Unlike her, he inquired of his own heart to what the feelings which were so busy in his bosom were ultimately to lead, and the momentary light which had streamed over the prospect passed away as his eyes gazed upon it firmly.

There was nothing but misery before him. Though the sorrow was delayed, yet it was no less certain. Though the hand of Adela was not yet given, it was equally sure to be bestowed on some one ere long—on some one, perhaps, less worthy than the noble and generous man who had now renounced it. For him there was no expectation, for him the prospect of the coming years was all darkness; and the speedy separation which was to take place between him and Adela did not even leave him the only mitigation which the hopelessness of his condition might have received—the delight of passing the intervening hours with her, till the bitter moment arrived which was to part them, it might be for ever.

As he thus thought—and it must always be remembered that Albert Denyn never thought but with the purposes of right—he asked himself what consolation, or rather what advantage, could arise from his remaining where he was, even

were it possible: to what could it bring him? he inquired; what could be the result either to himself or to Adela?

He felt, he knew that he was loved: it might be some temporary satisfaction to her as well as him were he to remain; but what would be the end? what could be the ultimate consequence? what but more misery to her and to himself? Could he, he asked himself—could he assure his own heart that the time would never come when, in some unforeseen moment, in some hour of strong temptation, his love might be spoken to Adela and hers to him; when words might be said which he had no right to say; when feelings which he had no right to entertain might find voice; and when he might violate the confidence reposed in him, and have to reproach himself for ever with having voluntarily, by his own rash act, contributed to confirm a passion which he was bound by every principle of honour to combat? He felt it was but too likely that such a thing might happen, that such a moment might come: he acknowledged that both for Adela and himself it would be better that he were far removed.

When once he saw what was the clear way of duty, Albert bent all the energies of his mind to follow it without hesitation; and instead of regretting the near approach of the time when his departure was to take place, he thanked God that it was so, and looked forward to the moment with satisfaction.

"It is better," he said to himself, "it is far better that it should be so: despair is my only portion through life; but she cannot love me as well as I love her—that is impossible; and there is no reason why she should not be happy. She may forget me when I am gone—I can never forget her, but my love for her must teach me to think of her happiness more than of my own: I will love her as she deserves to be loved—nobly."

Still, though such were his resolutions, they were not the less painful, and it had been with feelings of deep gloom that he descended to the hall. The honour that was there done him diminished not his gloom: it was gratifying, indeed, to hear such praises, though he thought them more than he deserved, and it was pleasant, too, that Adela should hear them, for he knew that they would be echoed from her own heart; but still they gave him no hope: for he was well aware that—except in cases where poverty was the portion of the noble, and great wealth that of the inferior rank—the union of a lady of high degree with any one less than noble had never been heard of in the land.

"Such a vision would be vain indeed," he thought, "and is not for me to indulge. My path is clear, my duty unquestionable, and it I will perform, let it cost me what it may."

He was tried sooner than he expected. The evening passed away at length, and Albert cast himself down to seek some repose, but sleep came not for many hours; and when it did come it was full of restless and confused visions, till within a few hours of the dawn. Then indeed he slept, and was still deep in slumber when some one awoke him and called him to the chamber of the Captal de Buch. Albert rose and dressed himself hastily, somewhat ashamed to find the morning so far advanced.

The captal, when the young man reached his chamber, appeared to have been long up. He was seated at a table reading, with a countenance grave and somewhat sad—it might indeed be called stern; for in his bosom there were feelings which he struggled to restrain, and he felt as if he were in combat with an enemy, so that his brow bore upon it strong signs of the contest in which he was engaged.

"You sleep late, young man," he said, when Albert entered.

"It is not my habit, my lord," replied Albert; "but I was much fatigued last night—too much, indeed, to sleep, till it was time to rise."

The captal looked down for several moments in silence. "I sent for you," he said at length, "because, as you know, it is my purpose to go hence this day. Since first you entered into my band, as it seemed at the time gladly, you have had means of serving your own lord so well that circumstances are greatly changed; and perhaps it may please you more to remain here, now that an honourable station is before you, than to accompany me to a distant land. Should it be so, I set you free: nay, more—I will do what I can to advance you."

"A thousand thanks, my noble lord," replied Albert Denyn; "but you much mistake me if you think that aught can alter my purpose of seeking honour and renown in arms. I know not where I can so well find it as in your steps; and unless I have done something to offend, I beseech you let me follow you as you once promised me."

"Is such indeed your wish?" demanded the captal, with a look still incredulous. "Mark me, youth: fear not to displease either me or your good Lord of Mauvinet. If you desire rather to stay than to go, I will so speak to that noble gentleman, that the proposal may come from him and not from you, and doubtless he will promote your fortunes here."

"I see, my lord, I must have offended," replied Albert; "but believe me it has been unwittingly."

"No, on my honour," replied the captal with a smile; "I have taken no offence. I thought but to please thee, youth. However, if thou wilt go, now is the time to say so."

"Undoubtedly, my lord," replied Albert: "my choice has never been shaken. If you permit it, I will go with you, and am ready this very hour."

"So be it, then," replied the captal; "and perchance it may go better with thee than if thou hadst staid behind."

"I doubt it not, my lord," replied Albert: "though it may give me some pain to part with many an old friend, and many a scene where I have spent happy hours, yet I am sure that in going I do what is right, and will therefore cast behind me all regrets."

"So shall you ever do well," replied the captal. "At three this afternoon we will begin our march, and enter Mons by moonlight. You have arms, I know: here is a purse of gold for you, good youth—you may find it needful on the road."

"I would fain win it first," replied Albert, drawing back. "My Lord of Mauvinet has supplied me plentifully, and wealth and renown are both sweetest when first earned. I have a noble horse too, my good lord; so that I need nothing but your favour and fortune's, good opportunity, and a somewhat lighter heart."

"Fie, lad!" replied the captal, with a faint smile: "you would not have a lighter heart than your lord's? And yet you have good cause," he added; "but it matters not: get you gone, and be ready when my trumpets sound. You shall win honour and renown, which, after all, are better than all else on earth—ay, youth, even than a lady's favour. So now, away; make the most of your minutes, bid adieu to your friends, and give as little time to thought as may be; for thought loads the heart, and does but little good when resolutions are once taken."

Albert withdrew, for the captal again bent down his eyes upon his book, as a signal for him to withdraw; but as Albert passed through the doorway he saw the gallant soldier raise his look towards the sky, and had he been near, might have heard him say, "This is very strange!"

Every one must have felt and acknowledged, at some period of life, that there are few things more bitter on earth than to part with those we love; but that bitterness is a thousand-fold increased when no tear most stain the eyelid, when no sigh must pass the lip, when we must speak hopeful words of

future meetings, and seem to break easily the ties that it tears our hearts to sever. Then indeed the pain is terrible—then indeed the grief is deep. There were few pangs wanting in the breast of Albert Denyn when the trumpets of the capital sounded to horse, and the whole party assembled in the court-yard of the castle to see the gallant train depart. The youth had not ventured within the halls, but stood with the rest of the retainers, till the capital himself with the Lord of Mauvinet came forth into the court. Adela accompanied them, leaning on her father's arm; and as the great leader stood beside his horse, she forced herself to speak formal words of courtesy to the departing nobleman, although her eyes were full of tears and her cheek was as pale as death. She looked towards Albert Denyn, but durst not speak to him, till at length her father called him by name and the youth came near.

"Adieu, adieu!" said the Lord of Mauvinet. "You go to win honour and renown; I may say indeed that you have already won it, but glory may still be added to each day. Fare you well, my boy; I part from you as from a son, with regret, but with hope and expectation. Do ever such deeds as you have lately done, and you will rise to high fortunes and win an immortal name. Give me your hand, Albert: I owe you more than I owe any other man on earth. The time of repayment will sooner or later come, and you shall ever find me both ready and willing to acknowledge the debt and to acquit it." Albert pressed his lips upon his lord's hand; and the count, yielding to the feelings of his heart, took him in his arms and held him kindly to his bosom.

"Thank him, Adela," added the Lord of Mauvinet, after a moment's silence: "in your behalf have his first deeds been done: give him your check, girl, and bid him win high renown for your love."

The Lord of Mauvinet spoke in jest, though in the very jest itself there might be deeper thoughts than there seemed; but he little knew what were the sensations he excited in the hearts of Adela and Albert Denyn. She trembled in every limb as the youth approached her; but Albert, with a calm and steady step, though with feelings as intense as her own, advanced and took her hand, and then, according to her father's words, pressed his lips upon her cheek.

"The first," murmured he, as he did so, in a voice inaudible to any other ear but her own; "the first, perchance the last."

Even as he spoke, he bent his knee to the ground, and taking her hand in his, imprinted a kiss there also; then

springing up with wild eagerness he turned towards his horse, bowing low to the count as he passed, and put his foot into the stirrup. The capta! waved his hand to the trumpeter of his troop, a loud blast echoed upon the air, and in a moment the whole troop was in motion and winding out through the gates of the castle.

The last who departed was the capta!; and as he disappeared beneath the portal of the barbican, the count turned round, startled by a sound of quick-coming feet behind him, when, to his surprise and alarm, he beheld his daughter supported by some of her women, with her eyes closed and the ashy hue of death upon her cheek.

CHAPTER XVII.

A loud shout of laughter was the first thing that roused Albert Denyn from a state of mind for which it is difficult to find a name. It was not a reverie, for thought seemed quite extinguished and recollection to have left him so long as it lasted. It was as if all had gone out, even the active consciousness that he had parted, perhaps for ever, from her he loved best. All appeared to be swallowed up in one painful sensation, vague, sad, ill-defined, but not the less terrible because the dark certainty seemed to have neither shape nor feature.

The first thing that roused him, I have said, was a gay laugh; and looking round he found that he himself was the subject of the mirth that met his ear. He might perhaps have been angry had he not been so sad; but the bitterness of his heart left no room for other sensations, and he fell into his reverie again, though somewhat less profoundly than before. Had he been angry, his anger would but have raised more laughter. As it was, however, the calm, sad look which he turned upon his merry companions had some effect even upon them, though they were men, for the most part, who had seen so many scenes of strife and desolation that their hearts had become, as it were, hardened in the furnace of war, and they had but little capability of feeling any of the softer affections of human nature.

"There! let him alone, let him alone," said one of the old soldiers: "he is a moody youth: did you not see how he kept apart from us all in the castle?"

"Pride as well as melancholy, perhaps," said another.

"No, no," replied a younger man: "old Henry the henchman told me that he used to be as gay as a lark, but had become gloomy lately."

"In love, for a thousand *millons*!"* said another youth.

"Love!" exclaimed the old soldier again. "You young fools are always thinking of love. I will bet you, Tom Wilson, that if your mother's cat were sick of a quinsy you would vow it was love."

"All envy, old Raymond," replied the youth, in a gay tone: "you know very little of what love is, seeing that you find few enough to fall in love with you. You want experience, man; you want experience! Now will I bet you a crown that the youth is in love, and I will ask him too ere the day be over."

"He will give thee a buffet, I warrant," answered the elder man; "and so will I, if thou holdest not thy prate. But what is this our lord is speaking to? By heaven! he seems to have got hold of a tame bear! Halt there! halt! The word is given to halt. Now I would give a gold chain to ride on and hear the bear speak, and the captal answer him."

"Why, our moody comrade seems resolved to do so," said another. "See! he sets spurs to his horse and is 'up at the captal's side in a minute. By my life! he is somewhat bold."

"Do as good service as he did yesterday," replied another, "and be as bold yourself, if you will."

It was in truth as the man had said; for Albert Desfyn had galloped forward suddenly to the side of the captal, on seeing him pause and speak to an uncouth-looking being clad in goatskins, who thrust himself right in the way of the leader's horse. The captal's followers were naturally surprised at what seemed an act of great presumption; but such will not be the case with the reader, who must have perceived that the youth recognised at once, in the personage who stopped the captal, his companion in the prison of the adventurers, to whom indeed he owed so much.

The captal was speaking with the old man, as we have said, when the youth came up, and continued his conversation without observing him, saying—

"By my faith, I will go on! They shall not turn me from my way."

"As thou wilt," replied the other; "as thou wilt, knight;

* A gold coin of that day.

nevertheless I have told thee truth, and that thou wilt find right soon."

"How many, say you?" demanded the captal.

"Full five hundred," replied the old man; "well-armed, prepared, and eager."

"That is too great an odds, indeed," said the Captal de Buch, after thinking for a moment, "but how can I make sure of this? You are a stranger to me, old man: it may be a falsehood or a folly. How shall I know the truth?"

"You may rely in all confidence, my lord," exclaimed Albert: "this is the man I mentioued to you, who in fact set me free when I was a prisoner in the hands of the adventurers. I would trust him, my lord, with my life."

"Ay," replied Walleran, "thou art young and in the age of confidence. Thy leader has learnt better in a harder school than thou hast ever known. Past thirty years, man can trust no longer: the first thing that youth loses is its faith in human truth."

"Nay," exclaimed the captal—"nay, thou shalt not say so of me. I will trust thee, too, old man. Though I have seen much deceit, I have felt it little, and therefore cannot claim so sad a right to doubt. I will trust thee. Where say you that they lie in wait?"

"On the straight road between this and Mans: come but to the top of yon high hill and you may see them, or at least a part."

"We must not show ourselves," replied the captal; "we will go with you: not that I doubt your word, but that I may count our adventurous friends with my own eyes. It must never be said the Captal de Buch turned back before a force less than six times his number."

"Be your reputation as mad as it will," replied the old man, "here shall you find enough to satisfy it; for there are not only six, but twelve times your number. But come you too, good youth," he added; "for I have something to claim from this great man, and may need some intercession."

The captal smiled. "Come," he said; "Albert, come; I too may need you. You know the country well, I think. Halt there!" he continued, speaking to those who followed; and then riding slowly on, he proceeded up the hill, converging with the old man and Albert Denyn. The latter soon found that Walleran Urgel had brought tidings of a large band of the adventurers—in number, it seemed, some five hundred—having posted themselves upon the road to Mans, as if seeking to intercept the captal on his way. His proposed

journey had been made no secret; the part he had taken against the free companions had been conspicuous, the money he bore with him was necessarily considerable, and both revenge and avarice might well induce the adventurers to lay an ambush in his way. From time to time, as he rode forward, the captal turned his eyes upon Albert Denyn, as if seeking to read his young companion's feelings on this new danger. He could gather little, however, from the youth's countenance, which was quite calm; and when he had reached the summit of the hill, he demanded—

"Well, Albert, what think you? should we turn back to Mauvinet?"

"Nay, my lord," said Albert Denyn, "I am unfit to give advice; but to turn back, methinks, would ill become one of the most renowned soldiers in the land."

The captal only answered by a smile; and in a moment or two after, they reached a spot whence they could descry, at the distance of about a couple of miles, a considerable body of men gathered together in a hollow way.

The captal gazed forth in silence for a moment or two, and then, speaking to himself, he said, "About two hundred."

"There are more beyond," said the old man.

"I see them," answered the captal, calmly; "but as only their spear-heads appear, we cannot count them, my good friend. Doubtless, however, their numbers are what you say; and as these free companions under Griffith are soldiers not to be despised, it would be something very like madness to attack five hundred with somewhat under fifty men."

"Methinks it were," replied the old man, in his usual sarcastic tone; "but as no one can tell to what length knightly folly will sometimes lead, it is only for you to decide, most noble captal, whether your high renown requires of you to fall into certain captivity or death, rather than turn back upon your way."

"My lord," said Albert, seeing the captal pause, "I know not why you should either attack these men or return to Mauvinet. There is a road scarce a mile round, which leads as well to where you seek to go as that which these men have thus occupied. I can guide you by it, for I have known every step thereof from my youth. On the whole ride from this spot till within two miles of Mans, you come not within sight of that valley."

"Such must be the road we take, then," replied the captal; "for back I go not, let what will come of it. Now let us see your skill, good youth, as guide to a retreating force. And

you, old man, what shall we do with you or for you? Have you no boon to ask for this good intelligence that you have brought us?"

"Yes," answered the old man, "I have: it is, that you take me with you on your way: this part of the land is no longer safe for me, and I seek not to remain in it. Though I value not life, yet there is one act I would fain see performed, before I go on the long journey from which one can never return to witness what passes on this earth."

"I know not well how that may be," replied the captal, gazing over the strange figure of the man who addressed him: "your information is worth its price, good friend; but I see not well how the price can be so large a one. We are going far; when we return, heaven knows; and I seek not fresh companions on my expedition."

"You would say," replied the old man, "that your eye takes offence at these goatskins—is it not so? That can soon be changed, however. Captal de Buch, I have done you a service: you are held honest and honourable, as the world goes: I ask you but one boon, and will take no other; give it or refuse it as you think fit, and as you judge your name requires. A few short minutes would have brought you into the ambush of these men; through me you have found safety: will you take me with you?"

"I do beseech you, my lord," said Albert Denyn—"this man did so much to befriend me when I stood in need of help, and he so much aided in our yesterday's success, that I beseech you refuse him not. I have enough to purchase him a horse wherever we shall halt, and till then there are several in the rear."

"I will not refuse him," replied the captal, "though, to speak truth, what he has said is true—I covet not much his goatskins in my train."

"They shall soon be changed," exclaimed the old man; "for I well know that those who would willingly see a fool follow them with his cap and bells would shun a wise man in a goatskin."

"That is very true," replied the captal, laughing, "and yet they themselves no blockheads either, my good friend. There are too many fools wherever we may go in this world for us to be welcomed kindly for bringing a wise man either in goatskins or not. However, you shall go with us as far as you will; into Prussia, if you like it, to fight against the pagans."

"Not so," the old man replied; "not so. I would fain

make my way into Normandy, if you bend you steps thither; if not, take me to the Beauvoisis, or as near it as may be."

"We pass through it," replied the captal, "but Normandy we shall not touch upon; for there are many there who would fain engage me in other enterprises, which I must not undertake. I turn aside then from Mans, and make my way straight on to Beauvais, where one-half of the ransom of this good Lord of Mauvinet is to be paid."

"Ha!" said the old man, "is it as the price of blood or the price of liberty that you noble knights take ransoms? A splendid way it is, in truth, of gaining money, giving up your own bodies to hard blows, cutting the throats of other people, or depriving them of God's fair light and the liberty of their limbs, till they pay you a certain price for freedom."

"Not so," answered the captal with a smile. "There is no time to argue with you, my good man: I follow the customs of the day in which I live. I risk my heart's blood in defence of a cause that I think righteous and just, and in the same cause I spend my wealth and employ my followers. It is but right that I should make an enemy repay me and reward my soldiery. But come, let us return—we will find you a horse; so follow us. Come, Albert, come with me."

Thus saying, he turned and put his horse into a quicker pace. "Who is this old man?" he demanded, as soon as they were at a little distance: "his look and his words are far above his garb."

"I know not, truly, sir," replied the youth, "though he seems to know well who I am, and all about me. I found him contending with the villain Caillet in defence of the Lady Adela. He seemed to use his weapons skilfully; but when I came up he left Caillet to me, as if in contempt. Afterwards, when they thrust him into the prison where they kept me, he conversed with me long; and though what he said was not like that which is uttered by ordinary men, yet it was all good, and wise, and noble—at least, so it seemed to me."

"I will speak with him farther," said the captal. "See that he be well treated and gently used. Our soldiery are kind enough at heart, but somewhat rough withal. I leave him in your charge for the present, Albert, till we have passed by these good companions, who are lying in wait for us here. I must keep watch myself till the danger is gone by; afterwards I will speak with him more at large."

The captal and the youth rode onward till they reached the spot where the knight's retainers had been left. Orders were then immediately given to provide a horse for Walleran Ur-

gel; and the capal, adding some directions to the principal soldiers in his band, regarding the cautions to be taken till they had passed by the spot where danger lay, advanced a little on the road. The old man, in the mean time, had followed slowly down the hill, with his eyes bent upon the ground; and manifold were the comments of the capal's band upon his person and clothing; in the course of which, their leader himself was not entirely spared.

"We shall have a fine menagerie," said one, "before we get to the end of our journey: a tame bear and a dumb monkey make a hopeful beginning."

"The capal was always fond of wild beasts," said another; "but I thought it was more of lions than of apes."

"His tastes seem to have changed," rejoined the first.

"And not for the better," said a third.

While these jests were passing, however, the horse had been brought forward for Walleran Urgel, and he approached calmly and slowly to the side of the animal, which, like most of those in the capal's train, was full of fire and courage. The animal reared and plunged in the hands of the groom, and the men present laughed in anticipation of the figure which their new and uncouth companion would make upon the fiery beast which he was about to mount. But to the surprise of all, when he approached with a calm air and laid his hand upon the bridle, bidding the groom stand back, the charger ceased to plunge, stood still and calm, and the old man at a bound leaped into the saddle, while the animal seemed instantly to obey his will, as if feeling at once that he had met with a master.

The jests died away upon the lips where they had been indulged somewhat too freely; and the old man would certainly have been treated with more respect on account of his display of horsemanship than all the wisdom of the world would have gained him; but at that moment the capal called him to his side, and added the name of Albert Denys.

Both rode on at once, and Albert received orders to advance some twenty yards before the rest, and lead the way by the road which he had promised to show. The capal himself, having thus signified his change of purpose, followed slowly, conversing with the old man, while his troop came at some distance behind, enjoying their usual thoughtless merriment, and little heeding what the next moment might bring forth.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WE must now turn for a moment or two to one whom we have not seen for a long time, but who is nevertheless a principal personage in the history which we have undertaken to recount. Passing over what immediately followed the departure of Caillet from the castle of the adventurers, however, we will follow him on the very same road which was afterwards taken by the Captal de Buch and Albert Denyn, though, luckily for him, they did not overtake him thereon.

It was on a dark autumnal night, in that part of France known by the name of the Beauvoisis, and a fair part of the land it is—indeed, I know no sweeter scenes of what may be called home landscape than are presented from time to time during a summer ride through the neighbourhood of Clermont, Chantilly, &c.; nor were there less of these in those days than at present, but rather, perhaps, more; for the features of nature have remained the same, except that forests have been cut down, and free common land changed into cultivated fields; and at that time, not only did the cottage and the church crown each rising bank as at present, but here and there the graceful towers and pinnacles of the feudal castle were seen raising their heads over the forest, or topping the highest hills.

It was night, however, as we have said, and night without a star, so that the features of the scenery could not be at all discerned, when the tall fine figure of William Caillet moved along through the paths of a forest not above a few miles from the little town of St. Leu. He seemed to tread those paths familiarly, and indeed it was so; for amongst the scenes of the Beauvoisis, as the reader has been already told, he had been born and brought up, although for the last eight or nine years, since the Lord of Mauvinet had become Seneschal of Touraine, he had lived with that nobleman near the banks of the Loire.

He was in paths, then, and amongst scenes that were familiar to him. Every object that he had seen during his day's

journey had called up some recollection of his youth; but how changed were all the feelings of his heart since he had quitted that province as a youth of sixteen or seventeen years of age! There is, perhaps, not one of the passions which tenant the bosom of man whose effects are more baneful than smothered ambition: it is like a viper in the heart, preying upon all that is good and noble within it, and tearing the breast in which it is confined, in its vain efforts to force its way forth and find a wider scope.

The serpent, indeed, is of many sorts; but of all ambitions, that which is the most injurious to ourselves and others is the ambition which is founded upon vanity—and such was the passion in the heart of William Caillet. When he had gone forth from the Beauvoisis, though wayward, obstinate, and wild, there had been many a better trait observable in his character, many a nobler feeling existing in his heart. He had not only displayed talents of a high order, but graces which captivate so as to cause faults to be overlooked when they should be checked; and the worthy chaplain of the Count of Mauvinet had fancied that he could never do enough to praise and to encourage the exertions of the young serf. Thus a heart naturally disposed to vanity was soon possessed therewith as with a demon, and on its wings rose up the passion of ambition. He fancied that all ought to be open to him; all that was done for him seemed too little; the distinctions made in his favour were in his eyes too small when compared with his estimate of his own genius and powers; and he became in the first instance eager to obtain more, and then discontented when his efforts so to do were not successful. Imagination but too often lends her aid to whatever passion of the heart is strongest; and as he walked in proud superiority amongst his fellows, he would often dream wild and extravagant dreams, even at a time when he was a mere youth, of what he might one day become and how he would then demean himself. But as experience was added and years went on, he saw all the manifold difficulties that surrounded him, the innumerable obstacles that presented themselves to his ambition on every side. It was in vain that he looked for any path, however narrow and difficult, by which he might hope to climb the hill of fame, to open a course to glory and renown. None was to be seen; and the ambition which for years had been growing up in his breast, like an eagle bred in a cage, only felt the power of its full-grown wings to beat them against the bars. He asked himself, why should this be? why men, far, far inferior to himself, should possess advantages which to him were denied?

why, by a mere accident of birth, they should have every gift and opportunity of fortune, and he have none? and every sensation that vanity and discontent united can produce now rose up to plague him.

It was long, however, very long, before he could persuade himself that some opportunity would not sooner or later be afforded him for raising himself by strenuous exertion to the height for which he fancied himself formed. Fancy ranged wild amidst everything that was possible, while probability was left far behind. The example of Artevelde was unfortunately before his eyes, at a time when his mind was not sufficiently formed to enable him to see the difference between the brewer of Ghent and the French serf; and on that example he built up visions of power and might, which became, as it were, a part of his own mind. Those visions, too, arose at a period when new sensations enter into the human heart, and Love claims his share, likewise, ere other passions can swallow up the whole. Dreams of tenderness then became mingled in the breast of Caillet with dreams of ambition; and Adela de Mauvinet, though then in extreme youth, formed part of all.

At first, his feelings of love were pure and high, in some respects not unlike those which we have depicted as existing in the bosom of Albert Denyn. But vanity was mingled with the whole. He had fancied that he would find means to make her proud of his affection; that he would raise himself to such a height that he could honour her rather than she honour him. But as such hopes began to disappear, coarser passions arose in the breast of William Caillet, and mingled themselves even with his love for Adela. He mixed with the peasantry in the neighbourhood, who were somewhat proud to be noticed by a favourite attendant of their lord. His fine person, too, and graceful carriage, were not lost upon the girls of the village or the farm; but a bad name began to follow him: the doors of many a dwelling were closed against him; and tales of betrayal, and seduction, and heartless licentiousness, began to spread around.

In general, the injured, believing his favour with the count to be even greater than it really was, were afraid to complain; but in one instance, a father in despair flew to the castle, and told his tale at once to the Lord of Mauvinet. The complainant was a man of the poorer class of peasantry, but of good repute, and honourable amongst his fellows; and the count had no hesitation as to the conduct he should pursue. He promised that the offender should be compelled to make

the only reparation in his power, and unite his fate for ever to her whom he had dishonoured. Fortunately for Caillet, he was himself absent at the time; for his was a spirit not to yield tamely to such injunctions as those which the count was determined to lay upon him, and what might have been the result cannot be told. *

He was at a distance, however, and the father remained at the castle, waiting for his return with some anxiety, although in those days the command of a feudal lord was not to be disobeyed; but ere the youth returned, the decree of a more powerful lord had reversed that of the Count de Mauvinet. Despair and shame had driven the peasant's unhappy child to seek refuge in the grave; and the tidings at once reached William Caillet, that the complaint had been made, the sentence given, and the decree rendered null by the death of his unhappy victim.

The matter was different now: where he might have resisted with obduracy and daring hardihood, had there been a possibility of his obedience being put to the test, it now became his policy to yield, and to feign repentance. He expressed, and perhaps indeed felt, much and deep regret at all that had occurred; but he stopped not there: he falsified the truth, and vowed that it had been his intention to do right to the unhappy girl, had not her own rash act prevented it. All the atonement in his power he offered willingly to make, but that atonement soon reduced itself to nothing; for the father, in mourning and indignation, would never see or hear mentioned one whom he looked upon as the betrayer and murderer of his child.

The heart of Caillet, though it had condescended to hypocrisy, burned within him, when he remembered the words of repentance which he had spoken and the bitter reproofs of the count; and though his lord forgave his offence, and forgot, or nearly forgot, the circumstance altogether, Caillet neither forgave nor forgot. Feelings of anger and malevolence mingled with all his thoughts and sensations. He longed for revenge upon one who humiliated him; and though in his anger the count had been but just, while in all his preceding conduct he had been generous, kind, and sparing, yet Caillet only remembered the bitter terms of reprobation and reproach in which his noble master had spoken of his error.

He dreamed still, though the count had placed his real situation clearly before his eyes, and in determining to wed him to one of the lowliest peasants, had shown him the point of view in which he looked upon him. Still Caillet mingled

Adela with his visions, but in a different manner. He no longer thought of winning her admiration by high deeds and mighty efforts; he thought not of acquiring power, and honour, and station, that he might obtain her in despite of all the obstacles of birth; but he thought—or rather dreamed, for it deserved not the name of thought—of gaining, like Artevelde, mighty sway and great dominion, solely as a means of compelling her father humbly to meet his wishes, and, willing, or unwilling, to make Adela his bride.

Each day, however, as he lived and became more perfectly acquainted with the state of the country and the society around him, such phantasms became less frequent and less vivid, though the ambition still existed, and even grew stronger every hour; while bitter discontent and envious jealousy followed naturally in its train. To such departed dreams succeeded things more dangerous; schemes and plans at first vague and fanciful, and little more tangible than the visions that went before. But his was a nature not to wait for opportunities, but to strive to make them; and other circumstances, which we shall soon mention, by increasing the intensity of all his passions, and adding a fresh one of still more terrible power, made him behold with joy and satisfaction the disasters which befel his native country, looking upon anarchy and strife as the only means by which his ends could be accomplished.

The circumstances to which we have alluded were these:—Some three or four years after he himself had entered into the household of the Count of Mauvinet, Albert Denyn, then scarcely more than a mere child, had appeared in it also. Caillet had at that time all the best feelings of youth about him; and although at first he felt some degree of boyish jealousy at the favour of the new-comer, it soon passed away, and they became companions and friends. Even the youthful fondness of Adela and Albert did not seem to pain or strike him; for although the latter was somewhat older than his lord's daughter, Caillet regarded him merely as a boy; and a report to which the count's fondness for Albert gave rise—that he was, in fact, a natural son of that nobleman—tended to remove everything like jealousy. At length, when Albert Denyn was about sixteen or seventeen years of age, he was absent in Paris and in the Beauvoisis for nearly a year and a-half, part of the time with the prior, and part of the time with the count; and about the same period, also, the Lady of Mauvinet died, leaving but one son, then a somewhat weakly boy. It was shortly after that event that some one thought

fit to jest with the Lord of Mauvinet on his fondness for Albert, alluding to the report which I have mentioned. The count replied with so much indignation, in Caillet's hearing, that every suspicion of the kind was removed from his mind at once.

It was not, however, till Albert returned, that Caillet himself understood how great a change the conviction that his companion was in no degree allied to the house of Mauvinet had made in his feelings; but when he did come back, changed and improved in every respect, a man instead of a boy, full of eager life and powerful energies, and withal a self-command and strong determination in right which won him respect and esteem from all around, new sensations rose up in Caillet's breast towards his young companion, and he soon learnt to hate him with a mortal antipathy.

It is quite true that in the bosom of virtue there exists, as it were, a touchstone for vice, and that touchstone acted powerfully in the breast of Adela; for from a very early period she conceived a dislike towards Caillet, which nothing could ever remove; and it must also be said, that by some acts of insolent presumption he contrived to render her aversion more marked and painful to himself. But in the heart of Albert Denyn the test did not produce the same effect, at least so soon. He had been Caillet's companion for many years; and when he returned, it was long before he found that there was no longer between them that bond of union which had existed in their boyhood. He confided, he trusted, as before; but day by day and hour by hour there came upon him convictions that Caillet was not worthy of the place he held in the household of the Count de Mauvinet; that he loved not the hand that showered benefits on his head; that he was discontented even with the high favour in which he stood: in short, that there was a bad spirit within his breast, though it was difficult to discover to what it tended or what it sought.

In the meanwhile the change in Caillet himself went on. He soon became convinced that Adela loved him not, but he did not abandon on that account any one of his purposes or hopes. He saw that it would be necessary, indeed, to pursue those hopes and purposes more circumspectly; and as he was naturally of a reserved and impenetrable nature, he shut up his thoughts and feelings in his own bosom, waiting for the time—which he judged to be near approaching—when in the overthrow of all order, and the disruption of all the principles of society, he might burst the bonds that held him, and gratify every passion of his heart.

His hatred for Albert Denyn and his love for Adela, or rather the sort of passion which he called love—for it really deserved not the name—went hand in hand with his ambition; and every murmur of the peasantry of France, every scene of misery on the one part and violence and wrong on the other, called up the hopes of obtaining possession of Adela by any means, however harsh and violent, and of destroying him whom he envied, by any device, however base and wicked.

Even while he was jealous of Albert, however, his vanity led him to undervalue him; and when he saw the growing attachment of the youth towards Adela de Mauvinet, and the notice which she bestowed upon him, believing it impossible that she could ever really love him, he did all that he could to encourage Albert, without seeming to do so, in a course which he hoped and believed would lead him to destruction. He pictured to himself with joy the indignation of the Lord of Mauvinet should he ever discover that the creature of his bounty had ventured to look with the eyes of love upon his daughter; and the words of anger and indignation, which he had sometimes feared might fall upon himself, he hoped to hear poured forth upon his young companion.

Such had been his feelings shortly before the opening of this book, and the changes that they underwent afterwards have explained themselves. It may easily then be conceived what were his sensations now, when, under the impulse of passion and opportunity, he had taken a step which his better judgment told him was rash, if not absolutely foolish, and when the result had been total disappointment, and for the time apparent ruin and destruction.

There was now no return for him, no repentance, no recovery: the act was done that shut him out for ever from a look behind. In the energy of despair was his only hope; and the entire overthrow of every existing rule was the only instrument which he could now employ. It might have seemed at first sight that he had little opportunity to bring such great things to pass—that he was friendless, helpless, powerless. It was so, and yet Caillet did not despair of being able still to break up the very principles of society in the land wherein he lived, and by such means to work out his own dark ends.

There was a strong impression upon him that great minds make the circumstances in which they live, and that a powerful will, joined to native genius, can do all. In some degree, perhaps, he was right, though he knew not that the greatest of all moral powers is virtue, and that wanting that he wanted

the crowning energy of all, which insures to genius and to resolution the utmost success that it can obtain on earth. It was a defect that he felt not, and therefore he was confident, even in the midst of disappointment and reverse.

He had now made his way across the land alone: everywhere he had heard of warring parties, and bands which might oppose his course. He found fear and anxiety wherever he turned, but he had gone on in safety. Obstacles seemed to disappear from before his steps, and from such facility he derived an augury of future success. He had now reached a spot where he knew that much misery existed; where various fierce bands of adventurers, during his lord's absence, had ravaged and destroyed. He was aware, also, that amongst the peasantry of many of the neighbouring nobles tyranny and oppression of the basest kind had been exercised by the lords of the soil themselves. Here, then, he was sure to find want, and grief, and discontent; and these were the elements with which he proposed to work.

With almost every one in the neighbourhood around William Caillet was more or less acquainted; but the rough and honest peasant, though he might be led at an after period to follow the multitude, was not the person suited to his present purpose; and with careful skill he sought for the dwellings of those alone who could serve him as tools or assist him as confederates.

At a late hour, then, as we have shown, he wandered on through the wood, notwithstanding the darkness, the danger, and the solitude, although he might have found many a dwelling far nearer to the place at which night overtook him, where the inhabitants, ignorant of what had taken place at Mauvinet, would have received him with pleasure and hospitality. At length he stopped at the door of a hut—one of the poorest, apparently, in all the land around—in the aspect of which there was nothing, certainly, to attract the way-faring traveller, and make him hope for either accommodation or welcome there. It was situated upon the extreme edge of the forest, in the depths of the low brushwood which surrounded it; and it seemed, in fact, though it was not so, to be the abode of some inferior woodman or keeper of the game. It consisted of four square walls of mud, and a roof thatched with fern and straw mingled together. There was a window on either side; that is to say, an aperture, which at that late hour of the night was blocked up with a board of rough sapin. All appeared dark therein, except where a treacherous flaw in the wood-work betrayed at one point, a

faint glimmering of light, showing that the fire was not yet extinguished. Behind the building were seen several low sheds, from which every now and then issued forth an inharmonious noise, announcing that the master of the abode was a feeder of that useful sort of beast, which contributed perhaps more than any other to the support and convenience of man in almost every country of the world.

When opposite the dark line of the hut, Caillet paused and gazed around him. "Still the same!" he said to himself; "still the same! misery, and filth, and dirt! They have cut down much wood here," he continued, "and doubtless it will be said that the enemy did it, the adventurers, the free companions. They are good friends to the warm farmer's fire-side, however much he may cry out against them. One-half of the fuel they take goes to keep him warm, that is certain. It matters not to me, however: this poor wretch here dare not cut down the wood, I fancy. He has not been taught to dare yet—we will see whether he be an apt scholar," and turning to the door he knocked aloud, exclaiming, "Ho! within there! let me in!"

At first no answer was returned, and again Caillet struck heavily upon the door, exclaiming, "Let me in there! It is vain to pretend sleep: I see the light through the crevices—open the door."

"Get thee gone, get thee gone!" cried a surly voice from within, answering him at length—"get thee gone while thou art safe and well: if thou stayest longer I will give thee a shot with the crossbow."

"A crossbow!" exclaimed Caillet with a sneering laugh; "where shouldst thou get a crossbow, poor wretch? It is I, Morne! it is I, William Caillet! Let me in, I say. Prate not to me of crossbows, man; thou that never hadst an iron pike in thy life, where shouldst thou get a crossbow?"

"Do not open, do not open!" cried a woman's voice: "it cannot be Caillet—Caillet is far away."

"It is Caillet, sure enough," replied the man's voice again: "I know him by his scoff."

"A good distinction," said Caillet to himself. "Come, open the door, Jacques Morne: I want shelter for the night, and though I might as well, I know, lie with one of thy pigs as in thy cottage, yet I want to speak to thee, so undo the bolt, man."

His tone and words leaving no longer any doubt of his identity, the door was opened, though still not without some hesitation. A faint light burst forth from some embers which

were yet glowing on the hearth, and a dark and ragged figure presented itself in the doorway, holding a crossbow in one hand, while over his right shoulder peeped the wild countenance of a woman, affording a terrible picture of misery and want. A loud unpleasant laugh burst from the man when he saw William Caillet; and he exclaimed aloud, "I told you so: I knew him by his scoff."

"Come, come," exclaimed Caillet, "let us in, and tell me what you can give me for supper: I am hungry, Morne."

"Hungry!" exclaimed the man; "supper!—then you may remain hungry for all the supper you will find here: why, I have been hungry for the last ten years, and never yet but once found sufficient food to say I was not so."

"Ay, it is a sad case," said Caillet, "and yet you have no reason to complain."

"No reason to complain!" replied the man: "if I have not, who has, I wonder?"

"No one," answered Caillet, abruptly—"no one that suffers it. Why, think you now, that if you choose to go on starving all your days, and moreover seeing your wife and children starve too—think you that men will come and put food into your mouth when you might take it if you would? But get thee in, poor wretch! get thee in: stand not there with thy jaws apart, as if thunderstruck at hearing truth for once in thy life; get thee in and close the door, and I will find means to provide a supper both for myself and thee."

CHAPTER XIX.

AMONGST all the great moral lessons that Shakspeare—the greatest, perhaps, of all inspired moralists—ever gave, there is none more striking, none that would be more beneficial to the human heart, if we could but apply and follow it, than the exhortation—

"Take physic, pomp!
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel."

Well, well were it for us—well for the hearts of the rich, even more than for the comforts of the poor whom they visit—were that lesson more generally applied.

Did we examine with our own eyes, miserably enough of all

kinds would indeed be found in the world, at any time, that the search was made; but in the present day it would hardly be possible to meet with anything equal to that which the cottage of many a French peasant presented at the period of which I speak.

That into which Caillet now entered was superior in various respects to some, and yet what was it that he found? A long crazy shed of rough timber with the interstices filled up with mud; the floor was of the mere earth of the forest, beaten down by the treading of feet; and in the thatch above, at many points, as well as in several parts of the walls, were seen crevices through which the night-wind whistled at liberty, and the rain of winter might find free admittance. No bed did the place possess except two piles of heath and withered leaves, nestled in one of which slept soundly two rosy babes, the children of hardihood and want. At the farther side, immediately underneath a round hole in the roof of the cottage, was a spot where the rare and scanty fire was made, and on which still glimmered a few dying embers, the only object which gave an appearance of cheerfulness to the desolate hut.

Caillet's eyes fixed there as he entered; and the unhappy owner of the place immediately exclaimed, as if fearful of blame, "It was all dry wood, branches that had fallen—I picked it up myself when I was driving out the swine."

"And do you think that I would betray you if it were not?" demanded Caillet. "Poor fool! am not I of the same class that you are—likely to meet with the same misery whenever it pleases the tyrants above us? Think you that I would betray you?"

"I know not, I know not," answered Jacques Morne: "many a villain betrays another for what he can get."

"Then he is only fit to be a noble," replied Caillet with a sneering smile; "but that is the fault, Morne, that is the fault—we are not united among ourselves: were we so, those men could not oppress us. But I will soon show you that I am not one of those who would betray you. Give me your hatchet—I will speedily mend your life."

The wretched peasant gave him the hatchet as he had demanded; and Caillet, opening the door again, went out, and returned a moment after, loaded with several large branches of wood. "There!" he said; "if any one asks you, tell him it was William Caillet who did it."

"Ay," answered the other, "and then perhaps they may punish me for William Caillet's fault."

"If they do," replied Caillet, "I will punish them. Now

make up the fire, and give me the crossbow: the moon is rising; and though one might have better food than venison at this season of the year, we must not be too particular when hunger presses."

"What are you going to do?" exclaimed the man, turning pale at the very thought of any one killing his lord's game; "what are you going to do? Nay, Caillet, nay; think what you are about."

"I have thought, and right well," replied Caillet; "and I will tell you what I have thought, Morné: that these good beasts which God puts upon the earth—these good beasts in their brown coats, I say—were not sent hither alone for the benefit of those who call themselves lords, but to feed mankind whenever man was hungry. The days are changing, and all this will be set to rights. Give me the crossbow, man! give me the crossbow! I know what I am doing;" and snatching it from the unwilling hand of the swineherd, he once more went forth, but this time was somewhat longer absent.

Taking his way through the wood, he went across a small angle in the neighbourhood of the cottage, till he came to the extreme verge of the forest, where the trees broke away, and some meadows and corn-fields were seen out beyond in the clear light of the rising moon. There he stationed himself amongst some brushwood, under the shadow of a tall tree; being careful, however, to place himself on the side opposite to that from which the wind blew. He had waited some ten minutes, and was beginning to grow impatient, when suddenly he perceived coming forth into the light, with a hopping, unequal pace, a large hare, every now and then stopping and raising up its long ears to listen for any approaching danger. The first sound that the unfortunate animal heard was the twang of Caillet's crossbow; and the moment after, before it could spring away, the unerring bolt struck it, and it fell over struggling in the agonies of death.

"This is better than larger game," said Caillet, lifting it from the ground: "it is enough, and will leave no traces." He then returned to the cottage, or rather hut, and throwing down the hare before the peasant's wife, he said, "There! make it ready, my good woman, quickly; and be in no fear—I will answer for what I have done."

"Oh! I am in no fear," replied the woman; "it is he who is so frightened. Often do I tell him that we were never intended to starve, and that if food is not given to him he must take it."

"You speak wisely, you speak wisely," said Caillet; "I

know not why we should be hungry any more than the men who live in castles—do you, good dame?”

“No, by my faith, not I,” rejoined the woman; “and though it is not for myself I care, yet my children shall have food.”

The man had looked on in silence, but the mention of the children roused him; and he exclaimed, “They should not be hungry long were there any other means of finding them meat for one day, without depriving them of it the next. Here Caillet dares to take a hare, or very likely a roe, were he to find one, because he is a favourite of his lord, who would protect him against mine; but were I to kill either one or the other, who would protect me from a dungeon, if not from hanging? and then what would become of the children?”

“Why, they would not be much worse than they were before,” replied the woman in a sharp tone, which instantly called forth a reply of an angry kind from her husband.

But Caillet waved his hand, exclaiming, “Cease, cease: this is one of the consequences of misery—dissension instead of union; but all this shall soon come to an end. I tell thee, Jacques Morne, that the time is not far off when the fire shall blaze freely on every peasant’s hearth through France, and when no one shall ask him where the meat came from that fills his pot.”

“Those will be bright times, indeed,” replied the man with a doubtful shake of the head; “but when will they come, Caillet? when will they come? Is not every day making our condition worse instead of better? We were always poor, now we are wretched; we were always slaves to one lord, but now we are beaten about by thousands.”

“Truc, true,” answered Caillet, “and it wants but one thing more to produce the change I have mentioned.”

“And what is that?” demanded the man eagerly; “what is that?”

“That the thousands buffet you,” replied Caillet, “till you can endure no longer—till you remember that you are many—till you are ashamed of being slaves to the few, and rend their chains asunder as if they were but bands of straw. I say to you, that if they crush you, you deserve to be crushed; if they tread upon you, you deserve to be trampled; for every man that suffers tyranny commits a crime against his fellow-slaves.”

Jacques Morne gazed down upon the ground for several minutes. “It is all very true,” he answered at length; “it is all very true, I dare say, and many a man would rise to

shake off this accursed state, if he knew what to do and how to do it. As the woman says, we could not be much worse than we were before. I have often thought when we sat shivering here, without food, or fire, or light, or hope, that it would be better to kill her and them, and then myself. I can't help believing that death would be very comfortable to people that suffer as we do; but yet we have no one to guide us, to lead us, or to tell us how to act; and suppose I were to say that I would bear it no longer; that I am a man as well as the Lord of St. Leu; that I would have right, and food for my children; that no one had any business to make me carry wood to the castle upon my back, and for my pains only give me blows to make me go on faster—what would be the consequences, Caillet? What if a dozen were to do so? We should all be beaten till we were black and yellow, and most likely five or six of us would be hung from the branches of the oak or the spouts of the castle. Is it not so?"

"Most likely it is," replied Caillet, coolly; "and serve you very right too, if you did such things without due deliberation and counsel. You want somebody to lead you, and tell you what to do: is it not so? Well, I will do both, Morne: only promise me, that when I do tell you what to do, I shall find you ready to show yourself a man, and not a mere beast of the forest, as these tyrants would make you. Promise me, too, that you will not speak one word of these things till the time is come and I give you leave."

"Why, I thought but now," said Jacques Morne, "that you cared not who knew of your actions: you bade me tell them that you took the wood, that you killed the game."

"So I did," replied Caillet, "and so I tell you still. Should it be ever inquired into, say so at your will. It is no personal risk I fear. But I tell you, Morne, that did I suspect for one minute you would go and betray my counsel in matters where others are concerned—that you would frustrate my hopes of delivering the peasantry of France by saying that Caillet is here, or Caillet is there, stirring up the people to revolt—I would take up your axe and dash out your brains this moment. But I know you better, and have no fear: there is about you an honesty made dogged by oppression, and which our tyrants call sullenness, which will make you bear the rack or the ber-nacles sooner than betray my trust."

"No, no," replied the man, "I will not betray you; but I fear you deceive yourself, Caillet, and that with all your fine words you will find no one to be the first."

Caillet laughed bitterly. "I am the first myself," he said;

"I have been the first to shake off the yoke. I at least am a free man, if none will follow me. The tyrants now know me, as I have long known them. I have cast their chains from off my hands, I tell you, and have spat at and defied them; and though their bloodhounds have been out after me over the whole land, they have not caught me, Morne."

"Ay, this is something like, now," cried the other, grasping his hand: "once the strife begun, and there is hope; but tell me more, Caillet; tell me more."

"When the time comes I will tell you all," replied Caillet: "at present there is but little to tell. Were I alone to set myself up against these men and put myself in their power, it must be the same with me as with you. We must have union; we must take counsel with others; we must have many men of different characters and kinds combined; we must conceal our purposes and our plans; we must have meetings of few and meetings of many; and we must pretend that all these meetings have no other view than to deplore our sad condition, and the lamentable state of all France, given up as a spoil to the enemy. Then we must choose the best occasion; and when we have ensured the aid of numbers and the good-will of more—when men's minds are excited by the story of their own sufferings, and their passions are hot with a view of the wealth and prosperity of others—then we must suddenly call upon them to do great deeds, and let them rise against their enemies before pale fear has time to make them hesitate. Once begun, the conquest of our freedom is half accomplished, for no man will then dare go back: victory alone will give us security, at the same time that it gives us power, and wealth, and happiness."

While Caillet spoke, his companion gazed down upon the ground, and strange were the manifold expressions that passed over his countenance. That countenance itself was naturally dull and inexpressive; but when upon such a face strong passions display themselves by outward signs, the effect is even greater than where the features are naturally less cold and heavy. Sometimes it seemed as if his whole soul were carried away by the bright hopes which Caillet's words displayed before his eyes; at other times, however, doubts seemed to rise up and fears to take possession of his breast, as well they might; for at that time the dream of resisting their feudal tyrants had never yet entered into the mind of any of the peasantry of France, except that of the bold man who now addressed him. The words which he heard, however, the confidence with which his companion spoke, the natural

ascendancy of hope in the human mind, all had their effect and the thought of revenge, which was pleasant to him, as well as of enjoyment and abundance, which he had never known, all affected him in turns, and made him resolve to dare the worst rather than lose the prospect of things so coveted.

All he replied, however, was, "Thou art a bold man, Caillet; thou art a bold man."

"I am," answered Caillet, with the usual sneer upon his lips; "and I hope that thou art a bold man, too, Morne, for none but bold men deserve to be free. I work not to liberate willing slaves: those that are so may remain so for me; but those who thirst for freedom, as I do myself, I will make free if it be in the power of man to do so, and that it is in our power who can doubt? Are we not in numbers as ten to one? are we not more hardy, more inured to want, and privation, and fatigue, than they are? You will say that they have arms—let us take their weapons from them; wealth—that wealth will soon be ours if we do but strive rightly to make it so. Riches will then bring many to our cause who leave us lonely so long as we are poor, and despise us so long as we are submissive. The people of the towns, who have set us the example in a long and bloody struggle with the men who were then their tyrants, and are now ours—they will aid us, too, when they see us resolved and ready; they too will assist and make common cause with us, when they find that we will bear the yoke no longer. Though they have accomplished their own freedom, they still suffer many grievances: they will take the opportunity to redress those while we redress ours; and even were they to seek nothing but their selfish benefits, they would do us good by dividing the power of the lords."

"You have thought of it all," replied Jacques Morne; "you have thought of it all: I will go with you, Caillet, to the death!"

"Go with me to life and happiness, Morne," replied Caillet, in a tone full of confidence. "If we are resolute and true to ourselves, death is far from us—death is for those who oppose men seeking their liberty. But we must have much counsel, Morne. Do you remember an old man who lived upon the hill above Clermont, who had great experience, and some learning; who had been with his lord into foreign lands, had seen many a strange sight, and marked many a curious fact? Is he living still?"

"Oh, yes," replied the other, "he is living, and still there

—Old Thibalt, you mean; but I know not how it is, he is not loved."

"Wise men are seldom loved," replied Caillet, "because they have to deal with fools."

"Ay," answered Morne; "but it is not altogether for that, Caillet, that old Thibalt is not loved: it is, that he does good to no one: though he has plenty of money, he gives not to those who are poor. He thinks of himself and of his own cunning; and when he hears of our miseries, he only laughs at them."

"Well may he laugh," replied Caillet, "when you are fools enough to bear the misery that you could redress with your own hands. Well may he laugh and set you at naught. And yet," he continued, seeing that Morne's brow grew somewhat contracted—"and yet, what you say is in some degree true: the man is selfish—he always was; but in this world who is not, Morne? who thinks not more or less of himself in all the concerns of life? I pretend to no such virtue; and be sure that the man who does pretend to it is a hypocrite. However, we have nothing to do with his motives, so that he help us with his counsel. If he joins us, it will be the surer sign of our success."

"Ay, that it will," answered the other; "for there is not a man throughout the land who will not say, 'Old Thibalt would not have joined them unless they had been sure to win.'"

"Then his name is in itself a host," replied Caillet; "for the expectation of success is the first great step to it. But now let us see where I can sleep o' nights, Morne. Can you not place me where I can remain unknown and you can visit me after dark?"

"Then you are obliged to conceal yourself?" said Morne. "I thought that you were come openly and boldly to proclaim our liberty."

"Would that I could do so!" replied the other. "Have I not already said that all depends on caution? and with me life itself hangs on prudence. You must meet, Morne, without my presence; you must consult without my being there. You must seem scarcely to know that such a person exists; and yet you must tell me all things that take place, and act by my directions alone. Is this asking much—perhaps too much, Morne? You may, however, follow or reject the advice I give you. You may betray me or not as you like yourself; it is for you to choose, for you to determine. I only tell you the way, the only way by which your freedom

can be worked out: having so done, you must do the rest. In three days the news will follow me hither, that William Caillet has rebelled against his lord and fled. Then every man that is seen with him, or who dares consort with him even for an hour, will stamp himself for ever as an enemy to our lordly tyrants; and for him the dungeon or the gallows will be all that is left. I have put myself in your power, Morne, and you can do what you will; but depend upon it, that with my fate is linked your own freedom."

"You are right, Caillet; you are right," said Jacques Morne, "and I will do as you would have me. I have thought of a place, too, where you can lodge like a boar in his lair. Do you not know that in the middle of the wood there is a hut, where I saw you once when your lord came hither to hunt with mine? I myself was to have had it first for my dwelling, but it was judged that I should be better here; and so they changed their purposes and brought me hither. No one has inhabited it, but it is still good; and very often, when I drive the swine into that part of the forest, I sit therein, and think how happy a man might be if other men would let him. There you can have as good a house as this is; and there is a way out behind, too, by the dingle and over the hill; so that in any time of need you have nought to do but to slip out by the door behind, and away. I can visit you there every night, and bring you what you want."

"Which will be but small," replied Caillet, "nor will my hiding last long. However, Morne, as you will have to purchase for me something, here is money. Of that I have got abundance, and can command more. There is a golden crown for you—take that; and early to-morrow buy me some wine, and bring it to ——"

"A golden crown!" cried the man, taking the money in his hand and looking at it: "bring you wine, Caillet! Do you drink wine?"

"Ay," answered Caillet, "and so shall you, Morne, if you follow what I tell you to do: wine shall be as plentiful with you, ere a month pass over, as it is at the table of the best lord in all the land; but in the mean time you shall share of mine: so take the money and let the wine be bought."

"A golden crown!" repeated the man: "I dare not take it, Caillet. They would not give me the wine, and would ask me loudly where I got the gold. They would say I had stolen it, and take me to a prison."

"Fie! nonsense!" exclaimed his wife, who was by this time deep in the mysteries of cooking the hare in the most

simple fashion: "you are a fool, Jacques: give me the crown and I will buy the wine. Then, should any one ask me, I will say that a charitable gentleman going through the forest gave me the money. No fear—there is no fear, man! no fear; give me the money! Now, Master Caillet, your supper shall be ready ere ten minutes more are over; and if you give us such every night in the week, you shall have my prayers and the blessings of the children. So, if my husband fail you, I will not; and he must follow where I lead, I trow."

CHAPTER XX.

It was the third morning after that which succeeded the visit of Caillet to the swineherd's cottage, and he sat in solitude within a lonely hut, situated in the midst of one of those wide forests which in that day covered a very large portion of the soil of France. His habitation was composed of rough wood; and as a change of mind had taken place amongst the builders while the small tenement was being erected, the mud with which the crevices were to have been filled had been applied but to one side of the building; so that the other three were only stopped by a quantity of dried leaves and moss, which had been crammed into the crevices. Many efforts had been made to give the place an air of comfort since Caillet himself had tenanted it; but the attempt had produced very little effect, and the aspect of the interior was that of desolation. A stool and a table had been formed on the crooked branches of the trees; and the bed of dry leaves which one corner contained had been delicately covered over with moss, which glistened in its fresh greenness, as if a velvet pall had been there cast down upon the ground. A fire was lighted in another corner, for it was now cold; and in a third stood several of the large leathern bottles which were the common wine-vessels in those days.

The face of Caillet, however, was dark and gloomy, and bitter as well as agitated were the images which tenanted his bosom. Hope has not so terrible an enemy as long, solitary thought; and for several days Caillet had remained there, only seeing the swineherd once in the course of the evening, shortly after the sun had gone down. While he had been actively employed in threading the dangerous ways between Touraine and the Beauvoisis, his mind had rested upon the

past, and he had gone on, day by day, thinking only of the present. Such, however, was not the case now: he was alone, without occupation for mind or body during the greater part of the day; and upon the past—though contemplation could not have chosen a more painful subject—all his thoughts now dwelt, whether he would or not.

Oh! happy, thrice and fully happy, is the man who can suffer his mind calmly to repose upon memory, without finding aught in all its stores to darken and embitter his review of the times gone! Such, however, was not at all the case with William Caillet: there was scarcely one spot on which his eye rested, as he looked back, which did not offer something painful to his sight. Besides the thousand opportunities cast away through life which every man has to regret: besides the follies and the faults committed, with which very few, even of the best, may not reproach themselves: there were innumerable opportunities wilfully neglected, there were innumerable faults and follies knowingly performed.

But besides regrets that would intrude, there was a sensation, the most painful of all others, creeping upon Caillet at this time—a sensation which nothing except the power of solitary thought could have produced in a mind so vain and stubborn as his, so proud, so resolute: it was the conviction that he might be wrong—the consciousness that if he had chosen another path, he might have been wiser, greater, happier than he ever could be now, even were his efforts to be crowned with the utmost success. But there was something more than even that conviction—something which aggravated the pain thereof in a very great degree: it was a growing belief that those efforts were not likely to succeed; that the men he had calculated upon for great deeds were not capable of accomplishing them; that vast objects—we must not call them good ones—could not be appreciated or understood by the beings he had to work upon; and that even those who had some faint glimmering of higher things and more important purposes than mere temporary deliverance from a particular inconvenience, each proposed to himself some individual benefit, some personal advantage, which would in all probability interrupt the pursuit of any great general object at every step, and ultimately overthrow the whole enterprise. He cursed them all in his heart, and—strange as it may seem to those before whose eyes the whole of Caillet's selfishness and baseness has been openly displayed—he smiled at the persons through whose interested pursuit

of their own views his purposes were likely to be frustrated, as bitterly as if he himself had been actuated by the most disinterested patriotism, and as if everything that he did was undertaken solely for the benefit of his fellow-creatures. The doubt of attaining his present object was to him a curse, indeed, during his solitary hours, for on success his every hope was staked; and when he thought of Adela de Mauvinet and her disdain, of Albert Denyn and his good fortune, of the noble master whom he had repaid with ingratitude and injury—when he thought of all these, I say, and at the same time feared that his schemes would not succeed, the bitterness of his heart knew no bounds.

Often would he start from his seat and take two or three steps across the hut in angry haste, and then return to the settle again, and brood in dark despondency over every gloomy feature of his fortune. There was still one idea, however, which seemed to comfort him, and produced a dark and savage smile of satisfaction whenever his mind rested on it.

"They will certainly rise," he said to himself—"they will certainly rise; for that at least they are ripe, if not for greater things. Some revenge will assuredly be mine; and that is the first object—I shall have some vengeance, if I have nothing more."

But still sad thoughts and anticipations would return. The man Thibalt had never visited him, though he had twice sent to urge him to do so; and from the reluctance which such conduct displayed he naturally supposed that the wary veteran suspected his views, and judged not favourably of his enterprise. He was now waiting the result of a third application, couched in such terms as he fancied might awaken the avarice of the old man, for his ambition he had failed to arouse; and the period which his impatience had fixed as necessary for his messenger to return had already long expired, so that he was meditating gloomily upon the next step to be taken, giving from time to time a bitter look towards the past, or a desponding gaze towards the future, when some sounds as of coming feet met his ear; and gazing through one of the chinks in the dilapidated wall, he beheld the swineherd Morne on foot, accompanied by the old man Thibalt riding on an ass.

The hopes of Caillet rose; but he had learned, as every one will learn who gives himself up to the sway of evil passions, to be an actor—a dissembler, if not a hypocrite; and to assume such an aspect as was calculated to produce a cer-

tain effect upon the minds of others, instead of allowing the natural emotions of his own mind to appear.

That man has suffered a great and terrible loss, a loss of one of the heart's best jewels, who has been taught to frame his words and looks with a reference to the opinions of others rather than to his own feelings—whose tones have an object, whose smiles and frowns are schemed. Doubtless it was the purpose of the Great Being who gave to man such varied powers of expressing his sensations—the infinite shades of intonation in the voice, the rapid play of features, and even the movements of the limbs—doubtless it was his will that all should harmonize the one with the other, and the whole be the pure expression of the human heart; and yet, since evil has had dominion over the human race and all the gifts of God have been perverted, how rarely, except in a child, do we find the countenance and the lips speaking together the real emotions of the spirit and the unadulterated thoughts of the mind!

William Caillet, however, had been long too deeply plunged in evil purposes and vain ambitions to retain anything like candid truth about him; and though his was a bold hypocrisy, the hypocrisy of pride and strong passions, he was none the less a dissembler. In the present instance he knew well the character of the man with whom he had to deal; and though he trembled at the idea of losing the aid of one whose cunning and experience supplied the place of those qualities which he himself wanted, he prepared to receive him with no crouching persuasions, but with that daring and firm demeanour which was the most opposite to the spirit of Thibalt himself. He knit his brow, then, he set his teeth, and folding his arms upon his chest, sat with his fine lustrous eyes fixed upon the door of the hut till it opened, and the swineherd and his companion appeared.

"So you are come at length, Master Thibalt!" he said with a frown. "Pray, why came you not when I first sent for you? By heaven! I have no light mind to take and dash your brains out against the doorpost for keeping me here two whole days when I have business elsewhere!"

He spoke so furiously that the old man drew back in evident alarm; but the moment after he replied, "Nay, nay, Master Caillet, I could not come when you first sent: I had people with me, as Jacques Morne can tell you, and ——"

"And you had heard," added Caillet with look of scorn, "that William Caillet had rebelled against his lord and set him at defiance ——"

"Ay, and tried to carry off his daughter!" rejoined Thibalt, with a low laugh that he could not suppress.

"And moreover that there is a reward offered for his head. Is it not so?" added Caillet, bitterly.

"No, no! Is there?" exclaimed the old man, with his eyes twinkling at the idea of profitable treachery. "I heard not of it. Have they offered a reward?"

"I know not," answered Caillet, "and little care, for no man will betray me."

"Are you sure of that, good William?" asked the old man with a grin—"quite sure? There are sad villains in France, good Caillet: you must not trust every one. There are many rogues amongst us."

"But none so bold," rejoined Caillet, "as to betray me when he is certain of dying within ten days after, for rewards little profit a dead man; and there are more than one hundred of the youths of Touraine bound by oath before the Virgin to kill the man who gives me up, within ten days after the act."

Thibalt sank into himself again; for though he was not one to believe easily anything but that of which he had proof, yet the oath Caillet mentioned was so like the times, and a vow before the Virgin to commit murder was so much in character with the savage ignorance of the peasantry, that there was a great probability of such an act taking place. Inasmuch, too, as the term of his earthly being was naturally drawing towards an end, and his hopes regarding the future were not very sanguine, he was fearful of losing any portion of a life within which he had bounded his desires, and shrunk from the thought of encountering the menaced death, though he would have risked even death itself for the certain attainment of gold.

"What, then?" he said, after a moment's pause—"you are not sure that there is a reward offered for your apprehension? Then you have nothing to fear."

"I fear nothing, and have nothing to fear, old man," answered Caillet. "If I had, I should not have sent for you, who would sell your own child for the price of a wolf's head."

"Thank God, I have no child," replied Thibalt, with his accustomed grin of misanthropic bitterness, "or I know not what might happen. But what is it that you want with me, good Caillet? For though the news has reached us that you have defied the Lord of Mauvinet, and were forcing away his daughter when you were overtaken by Albert Denyn—good little Albert, who when he left us last was as fair a stripling

as my eyes ever saw—when you were overtaken by little Albert, I say, who drew upon you and forced you to give up the lady ——”

The old man spoke with premeditated malice; for there is a sort of ill-nature which seems to give an instinctive perception of every weak and painful part in the hearts of our fellow-creatures. But Caillet interrupted him furiously, exclaiming, “He is a liar! a cowardly liar! *He force me!*”

“Nay, so came the report,” replied Thibalt; “I know nothing of it. But what want you with me, Caillet? for though we have heard all this, yet I see not how I can help you.”

“They have sent forth falsehoods,” answered Caillet; “they have sent forth falsehoods, as they always do, to deceive the poor peasantry of France, and prevent them from taking advantage of the only moment that has presented itself for years—the only moment that will ever come—for breaking their bonds and revenging many a century of oppression; but they shall find themselves deceived. Now will I tell you what I want with you, old Thibalt, if Morne have not already told you; but we must have some one to watch that no enemy comes. Get you up to the hill, my good friend Morne, and keep an eye upon the country around, while I repeat to Thibalt here all that I have told you already. When we hold counsel I will call you. At present we only speak of what you already know.”

Morne showed some unwillingness to be left out of the conference, but obeyed Caillet's directions after a few words of persuasion; while the old man Thibalt remained silent, with his eyes fixed upon the ground, and a look of deep thought taking place of the sarcastic grin upon his countenance.

“Caillet,” he exclaimed as soon as the other was gone—“Caillet, you are either a madman, or much more sure of all your steps than I can believe possible, if you have trusted such an ignorant fool as that.”

“I am *not* a madman,” answered Caillet; “and I *am* sure of my steps. But that has nothing to do with *my* trusting Jacques Morne. He is honest, old Thibalt, and will betray no one. He would bear torture and death sooner than utter a word of what he hears. I know all men with whom I deal, and act as I am sure they deserve at my hands. But think not that I confide either in Morne or any other man more than is needful. I have purposely sent him hence even now; for though he may be as serviceable as any other in bold deeds and strong resolutions, yet his head would but embarrass counsel.”

"But you will trust me, good Caillet; you will trust me fully: is it not so?" demanded the old man, his grin returning in a slight degree. "You will make an exception in my favour?"

"No!" answered Caillet, sternly. "Do not suppose, Thibalt, that I am attempting to cajole you; I know you too well for that. You are not apt to be cheated, and, to say truth, are not worth the trouble of cheating. Your qualities are different from those of Morne, and ——"

"You desire to use both for your own purposes," interrupted Thibalt.

"And if I do, where is the harm?" demanded Caillet. "We have all our own purposes; and if yours be accomplished at the same time that mine are, what matters it to you? Listen to me. I am willing to trust you, Thibalt, and to trust you fully; not because you are either honest or true, but because you are not brave, and, knowing what you know, dare not betray me, even were it your interest to do so. You hate the tyrants that grind us as well as I do. I have heard you a thousand times throw out to the peasants, at Christmas-time, such biting hints as would have stung worms to rise; but revenge upon the nobles is not your chief passion. It is love of gold. Now both shall be gratified—both vengeance and avarice. I, on my part ——"

"Yet a while—yet a while!" cried the old man: "let us take things in order, Caillet. You have said enough respecting me to require some reply, and I will give you an answer at once upon each head. First, you own that you seek to use all men for your purposes."

"Not more than they will use me for theirs," interrupted Caillet: "let each use the other, and each help the other."

"Well, well, such is wise counsel," replied the old man; "and so may it be with you and me, Caillet, if we can first understand the preliminaries rightly. But when you talk of *using* me and Morne for your purposes, you forget it is a long while since I have been so *used*, and I am not a beggar's dog, to guide any man whither he will, without knowing where or why, and with only such a share as he chooses to give me. What I mean is this, Caillet—instead of *using* me, league with me, and we may perchance do much."

"Such was what I meant," rejoined Caillet, "if I find you ready and willing; but I am first, Thibalt, and I command, though it may be with your counsel and with your support, in you will give it. If not, say so at once; for you and I know too much to be able to deceive each other."

"I will speak more on that head by-and-by," replied the old man. "It is right that we should understand every step as we go; so this one being determined, that I am not to be used, but to be consulted, let me say a word about bravery. What do you call brave, Caillet?"

"That which you are not," answered Caillet, with the sneer which always curled his lip in moments of tranquillity resuming its place for the moment. "That which you are not, Thibalt. Bravery is not alone the courage which makes a man fight when he cannot avoid it, for the sparrow and the dove peck impotently the hand that grasps them; not the courage which leads man to endure what he cannot avoid, for the bird brought down by the bolt of the fowler utters no cry, but eyes him silently till he wrings its neck. No; to be brave is to feel the spirit rise and glory at the thought of strife; to seek the danger, and find the perilous cup of enterprise more inspiring than the strongest wine; to see, where the way opens in the very face of death, nought but a new road to triumph and to power. This is to be brave."

"And this is what you are, I know well," replied Thibalt, who caught a spark of his companion's fire from the vehemence with which he spoke; "and if ever there was a man fit to rouse the slavish peasantry of France to struggle for rights that they have not only lost but forgotten, you are that man. Nevertheless, I am quite contented with the other sort of courage. As you grant that I can fight when needful, I leave it to you and such as you to fight when it is not so. However, to spare the time which is precious, I will own that now, now is the moment, the only moment that ever France has seen for her peasantry—her true people—to deliver themselves from the bondage of tyrants who have too long oppressed them; and that if this moment goes by, centuries may pass ere the hour come again. I will go farther still, Caillet, and tell you that to behold the castles of these lords in flames, and their bodies strewing the plains over which they have so often driven us like sheep, I would give—I would give this right hand. But I must first see my way clearly, Caillet; I must be assured of all that is before me; I must know what is to be the gain, and what the risk, and what the price."

"What is to be gained, Thibalt!" exclaimed Caillet—"what is to be gained! But I recollect," he added bitterly; "I must show you the immediate objects; I must show you the individual gratifications to be obtained. Listen! You know the Castle of Clermont; you know its ostentatious lord; you

know the riches that it contains, the gold, the silver, the jewels? Well, then, Thibalt, what think you will become of all that wealth when, followed by the band of avengers, I set my foot across the threshold of the place? Now see you what is to be gained? Our objects are nearly the same, and our rewards will be nearly equal. You seek wealth and revenge, and I revenge and—and ——” He was about to add the word *power*; but his keen clear insight into every turn of the minds of those with whom he had to act showed him in time that might raise up fears against himself which it would be difficult to allay, and he added with a smile—“and I revenge—and love. We will both be gratified, Thibalt; we will both be gratified—ay and to the full; for I swear to you, by all I hold sacred, that if you go hand in hand with me in this, you shall share as I share in everything that is taken.”

The old man laughed with a low, chuckling, well-satisfied laugh; but the next moment some sort of apprehension seemed to come over him, and he said, after looking down upon the ground for a moment or two in thought, “If we should not succeed, Caillet? if we should not succeed?”

“But we shall succeed!” exclaimed Caillet, almost fiercely: “what should prevent us from succeeding but our own fears?”

“The fears of others,” answered the old man. “What if the peasants will not rise, Caillet? what if, ere a sufficient number are in arms, we are attacked and defeated?”

“They will rise! they will rise!” answered Caillet confidently: “the fire of discontent and hatred is barely kept down in the breasts of the people. When some holiday bonfire has been piled up, and load after load cast upon it till the flame seemed smothered out and every spark of light extinguished, have you not seen, Thibalt, dark smoke rising up in sombre clouds, dull and heavy, and altogether unlike the glorious blaze of the devouring element? Then suddenly comes some hand with a small, insignificant light, touches the rolling volume of black vapour, and in a moment all is blaze and brightness! Such, Thibalt, such is the picture of an enslaved people: the fire of liberty still exists within their hearts, though the tyrants throw load after load upon it. From the midst of those loads rise up the clouds of discontent, and sullen endurance, and murmured indignation, growing deeper and deeper, and blacker and more black, till suddenly some fiery spirit, more daring than the rest, bursts forth into resistance, and the flame spreads from one end of the land to the other. Such, I tell you, Thibalt, is the state of France: now is the moment, and I am the man! Nay, I tell you

more, Thibalt: you yourself know right well that it is as I have said; none is more convinced than you are that we are certain of success, if you would not have come hither. You are not a man—well aware as you are that I am banned and proscribed by these tyrants—you are not a man, I say, to set your foot here, unless you were right sure that success is likely to follow me."

"I think it is, Caillet; I think it is," replied the old man; "nay, I will own I little doubt it, for reasons I will tell you of hereafter; but yet I would fain see clearly what is to be the result, should reverse instead of fair fortune attend you. What, I repeat, what if the peasants will not rise?—what if our first step be a defeat in arms?"

"I have considered that, too," said Caillet; "and though I love not, when once I have thought of all things and made up my mind to the result, to turn back my thoughts to dangers that I have considered and prepared for, yet I will tell you, Thibalt, what must be the resource. If, as you say, the peasants should not rise, or if we should suffer defeat before our numbers are sufficient. Some brave spirits will join us assuredly, and with them would I form a band which would scourge the land, rich and poor alike; the rich for having oppressed, the poor for having deserted me; and from the spoils of all I would enrich myself and those that followed faithfully. Such should be the result in any case of reverse; but nevertheless, Thibalt, we must take means to prevent reverses. Fancy not that, with all the fire and eagerness of my nature, I seek to hurry forward before things are ripe—far from it, Thibalt, far from it: the greatness of my purpose shall make me patient, and should it be necessary, for months and months I will consent to walk in darkness and hide myself from my fellow-men. It is upon all these first steps, Thibalt, that I would fain consult you. Is the time come yet, or is it not?"

"I believe it is," replied the old man; "I believe it is. In this part of the country I know that it wants but a spark to kindle the flame of which you have spoken. Yourself can judge better, however, of other provinces of France. What are the feelings of the people of the south?"

"Hatred!" answered Caillet, "universal hatred towards their oppressors. But you said, Thibalt, that you would tell me why you augur so well of our success. If you be not as sure as I am, of all France, how can you have any confidence in our fortunes?"

"I will tell you, Caillet," replied the old man. "It is because I count less upon the power of the peasantry when

they have risen than upon the baseness, the cowardice, and the disunion of their lords. Upon this I count, Caillet; and who shall say that I have not good reason, too, to count upon it, when they see no power in the land to put down even the smallest force of foreign brigands that infests it?—when a hundred and fifty of the English islanders dare calmly approach the very gates of Paris, and find none to oppose them while they ravage one of the suburbs of the French capital? If these men have not power to crush a pitiful handful or foreign adventurers, where will they find strength, I ask, to resist the rising up of the people of France? It is upon this I calculate—it is from this I derive my hopes, Caillet."

"Upon that have I reckoned, too," replied Caillet, "for I have not thought less deeply than you, Thibalt; but I have gone farther still, and have foreseen that these lords will have no power even to retard us till we have gained some great and signal triumph. On that triumph will depend the movements of an immense multitude; for not more than one will join us at the first for ten who will come in when they find that success is upon our side. Nor, Thibalt, is it alone the mere peasantry that will join us when the result is once secure. Have you heard the news from Paris that met me as I came along?—how the people of the towns are already leading the way, and will gladly unite with us when they see us successful?"

"Oh, yes," answered the old man, "I have heard of all that; but beware of the townspeople, Caillet: they are proud of their liberty, and are but little anxious that we should share it."

"But we *will* share it," exclaimed Caillet. "Did not I tell you, Thibalt, that I intend to use all men, and these proud communes of the towns as well as others? If you would know my whole purpose, it is to employ the aid of these communes till we have conquered for ourselves, and then to force from them an acknowledgment of the equal rights of all men. Once let the peasantry of France have gained some advantage, Thibalt: once let them be tried in the fierce struggle that must soon follow; and I tell you that such a force will be raised up, that the lords and commons alike shall humbly bow the head before us, and thank us for permitting them to live on equal terms in the same land with ourselves. I have already held some conference with several of these discontented men from the towns, and I know they are ready and willing to make our success complete, as soon as they once see that we are likely to be successful."

"Ay!" said the old man, with a look of some surprise; "and have the citizens, the cautious, careful citizens—have they dealt with you, Caillet?—you, banished, and fugitive, and poor, and powerless? Have they, then, held conferences with you, Caillet? Their cause must be somewhat hopeless, meseems."

"Banished I am," replied Caillet, "and fugitive I am, but neither powerless nor poor, Thibalt. Deceive not yourself, my good friend; you think that wealth is power; you have yet to learn, perhaps, that power is wealth. Power too I have, though you know it not, and power of the kind that gives wealth. This I tell you, that though it might be somewhat dangerous to keep much gold in this poor hut, and on the person of a man proscribed and fugitive as you say, I have as much here as I need, even to accomplish great purposes. Thus, this very night I shall give you five crowns of gold to distribute amongst the peasantry, with such words as you shall judge fit to produce the effects that we desire. Mind, Thibalt, mind: I know you well; and therefore it is that I warn you, this gold is not destined for yourself, and I will exact a strict account of every piece I give you. You shall not be without your reward. For yourself, you shall have one of these same golden crowns, and more according to the service that you do with that which is entrusted to you."

"But five crowns!" said Thibalt, musing: "the sum is small to distribute amongst those whom I shall have to see."

"It is enough," answered Caillet; "it is quite enough; and it, with the gold piece for yourself, is all that I have here now: however, should need be, more can be soon procured. I told you power was wealth; and be you sure that these good commons would have had no dealings with me had they not found that I possessed such power. Here is the money; and when it is all really and truly spent—spent so that you can tell me that for each crown you have two men's words to join us, two men whose hands and heads are worth the purchase—then come to me for more, and you shall have it were it a thousand crowns."

The sight of the gold produced by Caillet at this moment had far more effect upon the old man than anything that had passed before, although it must be owned that the various objections which he had started were more the effect of the natural timidity of age and caution than any real doubt as to his companion's means of success; for none knew the state of France better than old Thibalt, none knew better than he did the confusion that existed among all classes. He grasped the

gold eagerly then, saying, "Ay! this is good now: where did it come from, Caillet? Mauvinet?"

"Mauvinet never saw it since it was coined," replied Caillet. "From Mauvinet I brought nothing with me but a sword and a horse; whatever else I have has been gained since. However, all this matters not, Thibalt: are you mine? I ask you, are you mine?"

"Ay," answered the old man, looking steadfastly at the gold: "as the priests make men say when they wed, I am yours, Caillet, for better for worse; and, to say truth, I fear little that it will be for the worse; so now let us to counsel: what is the first step to be taken?"

"Nay," said Caillet, "on those points I must have your aid, my good friend. Being once agreed, our interests are inseparable. What is to be done, think you?"

"The first grand thing," replied the old man, "is to get the people to meet in large bodies; it matters not much for what purpose: I think it had better be for prayer—prayer for deliverance from all the many enemies and evils that overwhelm the land. Then the priests themselves, who are the great supporters of our adversaries, will give us their unwitting help. Oh! it is a mighty pleasant jest to make those tyrants cut each other's throats, and I know not which is most hateful to me, priest or noble."

"But what next? what next?" demanded Caillet.

"Why, when they have met," answered the old man, "and when they have begun to pray against their grievances, let some one propose to them to consider how those grievances may be remedied."

"Right, right!" exclaimed Caillet: "when once such a thing is discussed it will be easy to point out a way."

"Oh, yes, but we must do all gently," replied the old man: "there must be nothing rebellious, nothing treasonable in the first words, Caillet; all must be soft, and reasonable, and *very loyal*: we must offer to these noble lords our help and aid against the common enemy; we must beseech them to take compassion upon France, and exert their mighty valour to put down the plunderers that infest the land."

"Nay, nay," cried Caillet—"they will laugh you to scorn. All this will take too much time to do."

"Ay," said the old man, "to do—but not to propose."

"I understand, I understand now," rejoined Caillet, "and you are right: we must frighten neither lords nor peasantry by the name of great deeds till great deeds are to be done."

"Assuredly not," answered the old man; "but as soon as

ever the time comes when it is necessary they should be done, then we must suddenly plunge the people into acts that will leave them no choice but to go on or perish: we must put a barrier between them and all repentance. Caillet; we must dip them deep—ay, up to the lips—in blood, and with that red flood drown out every spark of remorse."

As he spoke, his shrewd, keen, withered countenance assumed an aspect almost fiendish, in which a degree of savage delight was mingled with bitter hatred, somewhat touched with scorn. That expression contrasted strongly and strangely with the looks of Caillet, who sat for several moments with his eyes bent upon the ground, and for the time the lines of anxious grief taking place of the usual contemptuous curl of his lip. Stern and ruthless determination, as well as violent passion and fierce anger, is from time to time found even in the character of youth; but it needs long years of hardening experience to render the act of resolving upon dark and evil deeds anything but painful to ourselves. At first the resolution to do wrong to others acts upon our own heart and grieves ourselves; but afterwards, like those stimulating foods which at first are painful to the palate, but in the course of time become pleasant, and even necessary to our existence, evil actions carry their delight with them, as was the case with the old man Thibalt. Caillet, however, was not so far advanced in wickedness; and he felt no slight regret at the thought of being forced, at the very first step, to plunge into an ocean of blood. His vanity had always led him to believe that the greatness which he would attain might cast a mantle of glory over any deeds that he might be compelled to commit in order to reach the eminence he coveted; and that he would yet acquire a mighty name, unstained with any but those dignified crimes which human vanity and folly have combined to render honourable. But now, when cold-blooded, premeditated, wholesale murder was thus nakedly proposed to him as the only means of attaining his end, the only hope of rising to power, and when he felt that what his companion said was but too true, and that some barrier must be placed between those that he was to lead and all retreat from the way on which he guided them; when he saw no other that could be raised up, but the dark and bloody one which the old man proposed, his heart experienced the anticipation of remorse; and while one demon seemed to urge him on, others scourged him ever for the path which he chose.

"I am afraid," said Caillet, at length, "I am very much afraid that it must be as you say, Thibalt. I would fain spare

human blood, if possible; but there seem no other means, and we must take those which present themselves."

"Wouldst thou spare human blood!" exclaimed the old man, with a look of contempt. "What, Caillet! is this you—you, who so speak? This is strange enough: what is it that you pretend to? Would you be a great man or a little one? free or a slave? powerful or impotent? successful or frustrated? If you would be a great man, you must shed blood in this world, and ever will do so. If you would be free, you must shed blood, Caillet, for the times require it, and there is no other means of freedom. If you would have power, you must shed blood: power was never gained but by bloodshed. If you would be successful, you must shed blood; for success can only be purchased by the blood of our tyrants."

"I know it, I know it right well," answered Caillet, "and I am prepared for it, Thibalt; but yet I may be permitted to regret it; and, above all things, at first we must have no mention made of bloodshed to the people: we must let them come to the thought of it by degrees."

"Oh, they will come to the thought of it speedily enough," replied the old man: "the people of France, Caillet, the people of France are like a tiger chained: once loose him, and he springs to blood as to his natural food. Our only difficulty will be to keep the risen slaves from drenching the whole land in gore, when sometimes it may be necessary to spare."

"We must try," answered Caillet, "we must try; but, at all events, no more of this for the present to any one; and now tell me, Thibalt, where and when can you hold the first meeting?"

"Why, anywhere," said the old man in reply; "it matters not much where."

"Nay," answered Caillet, "not so: it matters much, Thibalt; for I must be near at hand, though not present. As you say, it will be better that these assemblings should take place at some religious place. Do you remember the chapel some five leagues hence, by the edge of the forest, as you go to Beauvais?"

His companion nodded his head, and Caillet continued:—"Well, when I was here last there was a good old simple man there, a priest, who was himself a serf by birth. He would be easily induced, not knowing that there was any other object, to offer up prayers for the comfort of the people. Nay, more—I am not sure that when the first steps are taken we may not manage to draw him to our cause. Nothing, however, must be said to him in the beginning but that the poor

people of Beauvoisis do beseech him to offer prayers to heaven for their deliverance from their enemies. Let heaven judge, Thibalt, who those enemies are. The good priest will willingly consent, if he be there still, which I doubt not; and then many things can be done and said when the people meet to join in his orisons. You yourself can call the best of them together—by the best, I mean the wisest and the freest. Let them speak to the others, gradually preparing for after meetings; and before those come, you and I will be ready to take advantage of them. Shall it be so, Thibalt?"

"Exactly," answered the old man; "but here, Caillet, you will find us more prepared than you expect—more, doubtless, than in the south."

Caillet well understood that the last part of what the old man said was a trap intended to discover what was the state of preparation in other parts of France, rather than a mere abstract expression of belief; and he replied at once to his companion's thoughts: "Nay, nay, you are mistaken, Thibalt; the south is fully prepared, too; but there is a reason why we must keep these men back. If the rising is to take place here first, our friends in the south must have due notice of the day and hour, in order that we may have their immediate support and that they may have ours. If we attack our tyrants at all points at once, they will have no defence; but each will have to guard his own castle, and to fight for his own life and lands. Now, old Thibalt, now swear to me one thing—that you will act in this with me and by me only."

"What is the use of an oath?" said the old man, with a cynical smile: "oaths are but wind, you know, Caillet."

"They are," answered Caillet; "they are, Thibalt; but we will put oath against oath. You swear to me what I require, and I will swear to you, that this day six months, if I be then living and successful, I will count out to you five hundred golden pieces, such as you have now in your hand."

"Will you give it in writing? will you give it in writing?" demanded the miser. "If I get a scribe to put it down, will you make your mark thereunto?"

"I will do better," answered Caillet: "I will draw it up myself—it is better than employing any scribe."

"Ay, I forgot, I forgot," said the old man. "You can write, which is more than many of these lords can do: they taught me not that art; but perhaps had it been otherwise, memory might not have served me so well as now it does: however, you shall put it down, good Caillet; you shall put it down. I will bring an inkhorn with me when I come again."

"And you will swear then," added Caillet, "to act in this matter by my word alone, otherwise the agreement is of no avail. Mark that, my friend, and recollect such are the terms."

"I know, I know," he replied; "but you shall command, Caillet, you shall command in all things. Remember, five hundred golden pieces—it was five hundred that you said."

"It was, it was," answered Caillet. "But what is that noise before the house? Look out, look out, good Thibalt!"

"Nay, look out yourself," said the old man; but ere Caillet, with a glance of scorn, could stride to the door and open it, the swineherd Morne entered in haste, and closing the creaking wood-work after him, exclaimed, "Out by the other side, Caillet! out by the other side! I have just seen a baron's banner coming through the wood, with a long train of men-at-arms behind. They stopped and gazed about them as if they knew not the way, and we may be sure they will halt here to inquire."

Notwithstanding the eagerness with which the swineherd spoke, Caillet paused for a moment in thought ere he followed his advice.

"There are many chances," he said at length—"there are many chances that they draw no bridle here: the place looks quite deserted."

"But the old man's beast?" cried the swineherd sharply: "you forget that the old man's beast is at the door."

"True," answered Caillet, in the same calm tone; "true, that might betray us. You two stay here, then. There is no risk for you; and you, good Morne, seek me as soon as they have passed on their way: you will find me in the rugged part of the mountain under the rocks—where the little well is, most likely. But here they are: I hear their horses' feet; bid them good day for me if they inquire, and tell them I am gone."

And thus saying, with a sneering smile he turned away and left his two companions in the hut, making his exit by a door in the back of the building, which had been originally formed to afford an easy communication with the styes for swine, a long range of which had formerly stood close behind the cottage. Those styes, however, had long been removed, and that part of the cottage which turned away from the road was covered with thick trees and underwood, through which a path led to some wilder and more mountainous spots in the forest, but very rarely traversed by the foot of any human being.

Whether the indifference which Caillet had displayed on the approach of danger was real or assumed, and it may be very doubtful which was truly the case, it had its full effect upon his companions, who admired his calm self-possession just in proportion as they were themselves alarmed. They had, however, some need of forethought; for the troop of those whom they looked upon as their natural enemies was by this time at the door, and the minds of both turned instantly to devise some plausible cause which might be assigned for their being found together in that solitary place.

"Say that you have been pursued by a band of companions," said Morne.

"No, no," cried the other; "they would instantly set out to seek them, and find that I had lied. Nay, nay, tell them rather that I had lost my way, and came in here to ask it of you. Are your swine far off?"

"Some quarter of a league," replied the man; but even as he spoke the door of the cottage opened, and a page, with his horse's bridle thrown over his left arm, broke in upon their conference.

CHAPTER XXI.

"HOLLOA! my masters, holloa!" said the page; "come forth and speak to my noble lord the Captal de Buch."

Morne gazed at him suddenly without reply; but the old man, who in his day had seen something both of courts and camps, replied, with a lowly inclination of the head, "What would the noble captal? we are ever his humble slaves and bondmen."

"Who have you there, Maurice?" inquired the voice of the captal. "Anybody who can give us information?"

"One seems a dull swine enough," replied the boy, with all the insolence of presumptuous youth—"a mere Jacques Bonhomme; but the other is civil. Come hither, come hither and speak to my lord—he who has a tongue in his head, I mean."

"What would my noble lord, the renowned Captal de Buch?" demanded the old man, advancing with a courtly air, which he could well assume even towards those whom he most bitterly detested.

"Simply," replied the Captal de Buch, "to know my best

way towards Clermont; for I have spent so much time needlessly by misdirection, that I would fain lose no more if it be possible to help it: you are doubtless of this country, and can therefore afford the information that I want."

"Good faith, my noble lord," answered Thibalt, "I fear that I should make you but a sorry guide, for I am even now inquiring my way of this good swineherd; but from the directions he has given me, I doubt not that I can guide you to the next small village, where certainly you will find some one to conduct you onward gladly."

The words had scarcely passed his lips, however, when the old man suddenly started and turned pale; for a personage rode up to the side of the capital from behind, whom Thibalt had not before seen, and who gazed upon him with an inquiring and somewhat doubtful air, till at length the voice of Walleran Urgel exclaimed—

"How now, old Thibalt la Rue? how now? Do you pretend not to know the road to Clermont, you who have lived here for so many years?"

"I speak truth, noble sir, upon my word," replied the white-haired villain: "this forest puzzles and confounds me, and I was even now inquiring of my good friend the swineherd here the nearest way home."

"Pshaw, pshaw!" cried Walleran Urgel; "you know the way right well, whatever it was that brought you hither. Lead on, lead on! I remember you of old, Thibalt."

"Ay, but it is many years since we have met, noble sir," said Thibalt, "and my memory has sadly failed me."

"Forward, without more words!" exclaimed the old man impatiently. "I beseech you, my lord capital, let him be sent forward; he will guide us well enough if he be compelled, for it is as cunning an old slave as ever lived. There is some cause to think that to him is owing the death of more than one noble gentleman in years long gone. He is here in the forest for no right purpose, I will warrant, and his anxiety to remain behind us does but increase suspicion. Send him on before, my lord, and believe not his tale of want of knowledge—he knows well enough whatever he will know."

"Come, mount your beast, old man," cried the capital: "you see you have established no good character for truth, and therefore I must not credit your affected ignorance. Lead on then, and quickly too. What would you have from me?"

As he spoke, Thibalt approached close to his horse's side, saying in a low tone, "I will do my best to guide you, my

noble lord; but put not implicit faith in what your honourable friend tells you. You know he was always reputed somewhat wanting here," and he laid his fingers significantly on his forehead; "some fancied injury done to his brother in days long past has made him always hate me, though I call heaven to witness it was not I who betrayed the count: how could I?"

"Enough, enough," cried the capital: "I want no defence, good man. So that you lead me honestly on my way, that is all I have to do with you. Mount your beast and go on: you shall be rewarded for your pains; so now prattle no more, but be quick, for it is late in the day and we must reach Clermont this night."

"Not by my help," murmured Thibault to himself; "not by my help, proud capital." He took care, however, to give no vent to such feelings, but proceeded to the side of his ass and spent a few moments in arranging his saddle, calling upon Morne to help him, and whispering with him eagerly as he did so.

This continued so long that the capital grew impatient, and he exclaimed, "Come, come, no more of this, old sir, lest I ask why you speak below your breath: mount your beast and lead on at once, or worse will befall you. I am not one to be trifled with. Ride behind him, Hardman, and if it should turn out that his whisperings have been to evil effect, send your spear through him. Methinks I never saw a less honest face," he continued, speaking to Walleran Urgel: "you tell me you know him well, and that he did some evil in other days; and I can easily believe it."

"It is true, my lord capital," said Urgel, riding on beside him—"it is true that we should never condemn without proof, and there is no absolute proof against this old man; but yet there are moral convictions beyond all evidence, which come in when our reason fails us—and how often does it do so, in every stage of our journey through life? An instinctive feeling of love or antipathy will suddenly rise up, we know not why or wherefore, and God himself will seem to point out to us our enemies or our friends. All that is proved is, that the master of that old villain trusted, confided in, consulted him, found in him much cunning, much experience, and in the end was betrayed, no one clearly knew by whom, dying without trial by the act of a brutal king; that all his relations and followers being proscribed, this man alone was suffered to enjoy wealth and freedom, and has since become a freeman, having obtained his franchise by long living in a town, pro-

ted by the very monarch who slew his master. Where his riches come from no one can tell, but it is known that he is wealthy; and few entertain a doubt that his wealth, like that of Judas, is the price of blood."

"The case seems very clear," replied the captal, "and we must watch him narrowly; for it is not unlikely that he may think fit, by his whisperings with that dull villain, to sell our blood also to any body of adventurers that he may know of; and my head would certainly be prized at some gold amongst them."

"Thank God," answered the old man, "I have not yet murdered a sufficient number of my fellow-creatures to be worth the purchase. My ransom would not buy you a pair of gauntlets, captal; and yours would at any time enrich the families of all those you have slain. Such is the difference, in the world's estimation, between the man of peace and the man of bloodshed."

"Nay, now, tell me," said the captal, smiling, "supposing that you were able and had the right to educate yon youth"—and he pointed to Albert Denyn—"exactly as you would—tell me, you who cry out so much against the noble vocation of arms, what would you make him? The singer of dull canticles in the chapel of a monastery? or the solitary teacher of some country church? or the vain priest of some city congregation, the corrupter of citizens' wives, the hypocritical preacher of temperance and chastity, little followed by himself?"

"No, no, no!" exclaimed the old man, vehemently: "I would have him none of these things; but I would make him what knights were in other times, before bloodshed was a trade and knighthood but an office. I would make him the defender of the wronged and the oppressed; the man to whom, under God, the widow and the orphan might look up for help against tyranny; one who should shed the blood of the oppressor, but of none other, and should not lend his sword to selfish quarrels. I would make him, in short, in everything like the Lord of Mauvinat, except in not serving a tyrant and fancying that he is serving his country. Such would I make him if I had power to make, but I have no power; and though I do believe he deserves well, and to be something better than a mere sworder, yet he must take his chance, even as the rest do, and turn out what fortune will."

The captal smiled. "In this world, my good friend," he said, "we must follow the current of the world; and all that we can do, I fear, is to take the top wave and swim above our

fellows. As for that good youth, I will do the best for him that I can—the rest he must do for himself; but I doubt much whether whatever he or I can do will make him one of those same errant knights whereof the *fabliaux* talk so prettily. But let us be sure this old man is leading us right. Do you yourself know the country?"

"Very slightly," answered Walleran Urgel; "and yet it seems to me he is following the road honestly enough. But see! here comes a peasant on a mule: we can get tidings from him, doubtless. Look! the villain stops to talk with him himself."

The Captal de Buch touched his horse with the spur, and the animal darted forward at a bound, bringing him up to the side of the peasant, with whom Thibalt had been speaking in a moment. "What did he ask you?" demanded the captal, sternly.

"He asked me the way to Clermont, noble lord," replied the man; "he asked me nothing more."

The answer, perhaps, might have satisfied the captal, had his suspicions been only slightly awakened; but as it was, he turned at once sharply towards Thibalt, and detected at one glance a quiet, satisfied, sneering smile, which made him conclude that the question he had put to the peasant had been asked merely to deceive him, and to make the story which had been told regarding ignorance of the road the more credible. "And which, then, is the way to Clermont?" he demanded.

"It is a long way, sir," answered the peasant; "it will be much nearer for you, noble sir, to go to St. Leu; for you will not arrive at Clermont till after midnight."

"And how far is St. Leu?" demanded the captal.

"Not above four leagues, sir," replied the man: "it is but a little distance to St. Leu; and at the hostelry there you will find all that any one can desire."

"Indeed!" answered the captal; "that must be an abundant place. I have been in many a hostelry in my life, without finding one of these much boasted lodgings where nothing remained to be desired. However, once more lead on! We will try this hostelry at St. Leu, for certainly midnight is somewhat too late to arrive at Clermont. You will go with us, my good friend," he continued, addressing Walleran Urgel: "you know that we have much to talk about."

"We have, we have," answered the old man: "I seek not to quit you yet, captal; for my mission is not fulfilled, and I must not leave you till it be done."

The captal gave the signal for marching forward again, and the band, with Thibalt at its head, once more resumed its progress through the long glades of the forest.

By the side of the captal rode Walleran Urgel; but it must be remarked that by this time his external appearance was very greatly altered. The goatskins which had formerly enveloped him had been exchanged at the town of Mans for other garments of a kind less liable to excite remark; and he now appeared habited simply, but well, and as might become a person fitted by station to ride in company with the Captal de Buch. Nor did his air and manner belie his dress in the least, but on the contrary were still above it; and the rough men-at-arms who saw him managing his fiery horse with ease and dignity, and dressed in the clothing of a nobleman of that day, felt somewhat ashamed of the rude jests which they had poured forth when they had first beheld him, and acknowledged that, though contorted and deformed, the old man had a princely air, and must have been brought up in no mean school of knightly graces, where such an air and such movements had been communicated to a form like his.

For the rest of the way the captal and his misshapen companion continued in eager conversation; and it became clear that, although the attendants of the English leader marked with reverence the eager and confidential tone in which their lord's conversation was carried on, and kept at some distance behind, the old man Thibalt, on the contrary, was eager to catch the words that were spoken, and for that purpose suffered his ass to lag in its pace till forced to go on. He then, pretending to have dropped something, slipped off the beast suddenly, and ere the captal and his companion perceived him, was close to their horses' feet.

For this last act, the motive of which the dwarf seemed well to understand, Walleran Urgel struck him a sharp stroke with a willow wand which he carried in his hand, saying, "Get thee on, traitor! Thou canst hear nothing here that will profit thee. Get thee on, I say, and remember that thou art known and understood."

Thibalt made no reply; but crept forward and mounted his beast again, murmuring something to himself, the substance of which, however, no one could distinguish. The conversation between the captal and his companion was at once resumed, and proceeded in a low tone, but with evident eagerness on both parts. Those who came behind distinguished only three words, which were spoken by Walleran Urgel—"This very night, this very night;" but it would seem that

Thibalt had heard more, for two or three times he laughed, with a low, quiet, peculiar laugh, unpleasant in its sound; and several times he muttered, "So, so—I thought so; but we will see, but we will see. Foxes bite as well as wolves; so we will see."

Low clouds covered the sky, almost to the very edge of the horizon where the autumnal sun was setting with somewhat angry redness, when a tall steeple rising up above the trees announced that the travellers were approaching a small town or village.

"What place have we here?" demanded the captal.

"I really do not know," answered the old man, Thibalt, to whom he spoke; "but it looks to me very much like the steeple of St. Just."

"Why, that is on the borders of Picardy," said the captal, "and many a mile beyond Clermont: how is this?"

"I told you, noble sir," replied the other, "that I had no good knowledge of the way, and it would seem that the peasant we spoke to not long ago deceived me. At all events, it is not my fault, for I forewarned you that I could not guide you right."

"There is some truth in what he says," remarked the captal, turning partly towards Walleran Urgel.

"As much truth as to season the lie more completely," was the reply; "but let us ride on, my lord captal. Heaven knows whether we shall ever discover the motive of his falsehood; but you may be as sure that he is acquainted with this road as well as any man now living, as that you yourself are not."

"Of that at least I am quite certain," replied the captal, laughing; "but if his object be an evil one, he may find himself mistaken. We shall surely meet with an inn here; and whether it be good or bad, we must make the best of it for the night."

The party rode on, and the little hostelry at St. Just soon received them within its ever hospitable walls. Though the chambers were not many, and the accommodation somewhat scanty, considering the numbers that now poured into the court-yard of the inn, sufficient room was found for all; and the captal, who had kept his eye upon the old man Thibalt, saw with some satisfaction, that he made no effort to escape during the hurry and bustle which succeeded their arrival, but looked carefully to the housing of his ass and to the preparation of his own supper.

It may well be supposed that a personage of such impor-

tance as the captal monopolised a great part of the host's attention, and everything was confusion and anxiety to provide him with all he wanted. He took care, however, to speak a word or two to one of his men, giving him manifold cautions in regard to watching the proceedings of their guide, in regard to whose purposes he still felt some suspicion. He then went away for a few moments to see the chamber which had been prepared for him, leaving his train below. Several matters occurred to detain him longer than he had at first expected, and when he came down again he found the whole kitchen vacant, except where one or two of the servants of the inn were busily employed in laying out tables for supper, and otherwise making ready for the entertainment of himself and his followers during the evening. The rest, to say the truth, were all out in the court-yard, amusing themselves with the gambols of a monkey, except Albert Denyn, who was sitting at the door of the inn, with a cuirass, which he had been polishing, leaning against his knee, while his mind seemed to have reverted to other scenes and times; and an expression of deep melancholy sat upon his countenance, very different from the thoughtless gaiety which sparkled in the eyes of his companions, as the monkey sprang hither and thither at the commands of his master.

For a moment no one saw the captal; and he at length laid his hand upon Albert's arm, saying in a low tone, as if not to interrupt the sport that was going forward, "Have you seen our good friend Walleran, Albert?"

"No, my lord," cried Albert, starting up.

"Nor the old man Thibalt?" asked the captal.

"Neither, my lord," replied Albert; "but they cannot be far off."

The captal shook his head with a doubtful look, and called to him the soldier whom he had charged to watch the movements of their suspected guide. The man stared and looked confused at his lord's question, but frankly owned that his task had been forgotten, "though he felt sure," he said, "that the old man was still there."

The captal said "that he did not believe it," and it soon proved that his suspicions were just. Search was made for Thibalt, but in vain; and the captal, though he only laughed at the idea of danger, commanded his negligent follower to do penance for his forgetfulness of orders by keeping watch in the court-yard of the inn during the first four hours of the night. The rest of the evening passed over tranquilly; and Walleran Urgel, who had gone forth for a short time to in-

quire if in the neighbourhood there was to be found one of those solitary habitations which best suited his disposition and frame of mind, returned soon after, and partook of the meal which had been prepared for the captal, though he joined not in the gaiety which reigned around the board. When the supper was over, the great leader and the old man retired for a time to the chamber of the English knight, and those who passed by heard them speaking long and eagerly.

They separated not till nearly midnight, and the last words of Walleran Urgel as they parted were, "You shall have them all—at your return you shall have them all."

CHAPTER XXII.

ON the same night of which we have just been speaking, the sun went down red and angrily, leaving storms in the sky behind him; and the wind blew and the rain pattered hard amidst the branches of the forest in which Caillet had fixed his abode. The torrent from the sky rushed in at various points, and indeed only one corner of the hut offered anything like comfort. Amongst the hay and fern with which that corner was strewn, Caillet had cast himself down to sleep; but slumber had not yet approached his eyelids, when somebody lifted sharply the latch of the cottage.

Caillet started up and listened, doubting whether his ears deceived him; but a moment or two after, the door shook violently, and a voice exclaimed, "Caillet, Caillet! let me in: it is I, Thibalt la Rue; quick! let me in."

Caillet instantly drew back the large wooden bolt and gave the old man admittance, though not a little surprised at such a visit and at such an hour.

"This is, indeed, entering into the scheme eagerly, Thibalt," he said: "the youngest of us could not do better than this."

"Hush, Caillet, hush!" replied the old man: "shut the door and listen. Surely I heard some one by the well under the hill."

"Your own fears, your own fears, Thibalt," answered Caillet: "you will find few people wandering here at this time of night, except those who have such business as you and I have; but tell me what brings you?"

"Matters of much importance," said Thibalt, in a hurried,

anxious tone; "matters of much importance. But listen, still sister, good Caillet."

"Pshaw!" answered the latter: "if any one comes here, he leaves not the place alive."

"But suppose," rejoined Thibalt, "there should be such things as spirits, Caillet?"

Caillet laughed aloud. "What, Thibalt!" he exclaimed, "you with such fears! I never dreamt that you could believe in spirits! Visions of old women and children, of fools and dotards! Speak sense, and tell me what you dread."

"Nay, nay," answered the old man; "but I have heard, Caillet, I have heard ——"

"And so have I," interrupted Caillet scornfully—"and so have I heard, a thousand times. I have heard the priest of St. Peter's Chapel swear that he had seen a whole legion of devils come whirling round the place—that he had beheld them with his own eyes; but it was found out at length that the saint would not protect the place from such infernal visitors unless his priest had ten golden crowns to buy a new censer, which in reality cost five. The old women of the parish soon provided the money, and the devils disappeared. Out upon it, Thibalt! Speak sense, and tell me what it is that brings you here at this time of night; or rather, inform me first what made you go wandering about this afternoon through every road in the forest, as if it had been your pleasure to puzzle and perplex those you were guiding, and to lead them round and round this spot instead of taking them away."

The old villain answered with a low chuckle, for he was now somewhat reassured by the presence of his companion, though, strange as it may seem, he, who was restrained by no conscientious feeling, by no fear of God's retributive justice, was terrified at the idea of unearthly beings, and fully believed in their power of visiting and chastising the sins of man.

"You watched us, did you?" he demanded; "you watched us from the top of the hill, then?"

"Yes, and with no slight surprise," replied Caillet, "to find you keep them in the forest nearly till sunset, when you knew I wanted them away."

"But I wanted them here," he said; "I wanted them here, Caillet. I sought to detain them within reach of you, and for a reason which you shall soon hear. Think you, Caillet, that I know who is the man you hate the most on earth?"

"You mean the Lord of Mauvinet," answered Caillet; "but you are mistaken."

"It is you who are mistaken," replied the old man. "I do

not mean the Lord of Mauvinet—I speak of Albert Denyn, my good friend, the fair youth Albert Denyn; it is he you hate. Between you and the Lord of Mauvinet there can be no rivalry, between you and Albert Denyn there is. I know it all, as well as if I had seen it. Now tell me, Caillet, what would you give to injure him? What would you give to blast all his fortunes for ever, to take from him hopes and prospects of the brightest kind, and keep him in servitude and bondage all his life?"

"What would I give?" exclaimed Caillet—"I would give my right hand."

"Ha, ha!" said the old man: "you are honest in your hatreds, however, Caillet. Well, then, now for another question: do you know who these people were that came hither to-day?"

"No," answered the other, "I do not. Morne and you were both gone before I came down, and I have seen no one since."

"Well, then, I will tell you," rejoined the old man: "the troop was that of the Capital de Buch, and with him ——"

"Was that boy," exclaimed Caillet, interrupting him.

"Yes, he was," replied his companion; "but it was not of him I spoke—it was of another; of an old man; of one, perhaps, whom you have never beheld—deformed, contorted."

"Ah! I have seen him," answered Caillet: "long in the arms, wrapped up in goatskins; a madman, a mere fool."

"A madman if you will," said Thibalt, "but no fool, and without goatskins now, though what dresses he may wear at times he only knows. However, this man is my enemy ——"

"And therefore you would make him mine, of course," replied Caillet, blowing up the embers of the half-extinct fire, and smiling bitterly as he did so; "but you may save yourself the trouble, old Thibalt: he is my foe already. He came between me and my purposes, and that is what I pardon not, Thibalt. So that boy is here, is he? What would I give now for one half-hour face to face with him in this forest! It were worth ten years from any other period of my life—but that is impossible. However, what is it that you would tell me? How can you give me the means of punishing him?"

"Through this old man," answered Thibalt; "through this old man, Caillet; so shall we both have vengeance of our enemies, you of yours and I of mine: through this dwarf you shall inflict the greatest evil, punishment if you will, upon that boy."

"How? how?" demanded Caillet impetuously. "What has he to do with Albert Denyn?"

"Much, very much," replied Thibalt. "That cripple, that half-mad, half-roguish cripple possesses the means of raising Albert Denyn from what he is to high and noble fortunes? he will do it, too, if he be not prevented."

"And how can I stay him?" asked Caillet sullenly: "you tell me such facts but to torment me. This man is with the Captal de Buch, is he? What does he with him? How came he in the train of the captal? How can he raise this Albert? He, a beggarly wandering outcast!"

"I will tell you, I will tell you all," replied Thibalt; "but give us a light first, I pray you: you sit blowing the embers there till you look like a fiend by the glimmering glare; you have a torch, or a lamp, or something, surely."

Caillet made no answer; but searching sullenly amongst the dry fern in one corner of the hut he produced a large rosin torch, which he soon contrived to light, though the fire was low. Its red and smoky flame, however, did not serve to make the expression of his countenance or that of the old man assume an appearance less fierce and terrible; and as he moved about the point of the torch amongst the ashes, he continued to murmur something concerning Albert Denyn, which showed his companion how completely he had aroused the bitter passions of his heart.

Thibalt lost not the opportunity, but with matchless skill threw fresh fuel upon the flame of anger and jealousy, till Caillet turned angrily upon him, demanding, "How is it to be done? Speak at once; for, by heaven! if you continue teasing me any longer without telling me what I seek, I will drive you out into the forest, and leave you to the care of the spirits you talk of."

"What I mean is this," answered the old man, "that he who with a good and unflinching blow cleaves the skull of this same mischievous vagrant, will do more to injure Albert Denyn than if he were to lop off the youth's right hand."

"But why should I not cleave the skull of Albert Denyn himself?" asked Caillet.

"That is impossible," answered Thibalt; "that is quite impossible. There is no chance of his straying from the band of the Captal de Buch; and though a wolf may snatch a lamb from amidst a flock of sheep, yet one would need to be a lion indeed to seek prey amidst such a herd as that. It cannot be, Caillet."

"Then how can the other be?" demanded his companion,

"Will the misshapen dwarf, who needs protection most—will he wander away and leave the troop with whom he has already sought safety? No, no, Thibalt; none of such vain, idle schemes! I have already hazarded too much by seeking to seize opportunity ere it was ripe. Deal with him yourself; I will have nothing to do with that deed."

"I would deal with him readily," replied Thibalt, "were not good King John a captive in England; but this man, whom you hold to be a fool, has been wise enough to keep himself hid from all eyes till that danger was past. Now he comes forth, however, into sunshine, and fears not to show himself to any one. You need not fear that opportunity will be wanting. The captal leaves him here in Beauvoisis till he returns with this Albert Denyn from the north. So much have I learnt by the way; but if you let the present occasion pass, when he is near at hand, I will predict that you will see one enemy at least triumph over you."

"That he shall never," answered Caillet, "that he shall never, if I can prevent him; and if this meddling fool must thrust himself in my way again, the consequences be upon his own head. Nevertheless, you shall tell why, and how, and wherefore—by what tie this old man is linked with Albert Denyn, and what is the source of your enmity towards him. Ay, Thibalt, to the most minute particular."

"But listen, Caillet, listen," cried his cunning companion, who did not seem particularly willing to enter into the causes of his hatred towards Walleran Urgel. "This old knave must die, that is clear; but can we not so manage it that his death shall seem to lie at the door of one of these lords?"

"How can that be," demanded Caillet, "if I am to do the deed? But I will tell you what, Thibalt: I will kill no man secretly and in cold blood. If I meet him in the forest, he shall answer me for having crossed my path before; but I will not seek him and slay him in his sleep, as doubtless you would have."

"Not I," answered Thibalt. "You shall meet him in the forest, and there do with him what you will—ay, to-morrow morning by daybreak: but you are so impatient! Hear me out, and let us speak low;" and bending down his head he continued in whispered conversation with Caillet, detailing a scheme of cunning villany, to which the other listened with strange feelings, wherein stern satisfaction at the prospect of the promised vengeance was mingled with some sensations of contempt at the serpent-like art of his companion.

The result will be seen hereafter.

The morning was as dull and drizzly as the opening of any autumnal day could be, when the Captal de Buch and his party assembled in the court-yard of the inn. The hour was early, too, and the grey twilight and the greyer shower scarcely permitted the personages there gathered together to see each other's faces, as they bustled about in preparations for speedy departure. The captal himself, with his arms folded on his chest, stood watching the progress of the rest, and giving orders from time to time, till at length all was completed—the horses were caparisoned and brought forth, baggage and provisions charged upon inferior beasts of burden—nothing, in short, wanting, but the foot in the stirrup and the hand upon the mane.

It was at that moment, when the principal squire of the captal had approached to tell him that all was ready, that the great leader, looking round, inquired in a quiet tone, "Where is our good friend Walleran Urgel? Will he not come to bid us adieu? Ay, and the old man too that led us hither? Although he left us last night somewhat strangely, as yet we have no cause to think that he has deceived or betrayed us, and I would fain give him a reward for his trouble."

"He has not been seen since last night, my lord," replied the man to whom he spoke. "I sat up to watch if he would come back, but he has not made his appearance again."

"Your fierce looks affrighted him," replied the captal, laughing. "But where is our other companion? I must needs speak one word with him before we go. Seek him, Albert, seek him. He promised me some papers which I have not yet received. He is not wont to be a sluggard."

It was in vain that Albert Denyn sought for the old man, Walleran Urgel, throughout the house and the village. The bed in which he had lain was found vacant; the host of the little inn expressed a belief that he had gone forth with the first ray of the morning, to visit an old hermitage in the wood hard by: and one of the horseboys declared that he had seen him speaking with somebody in the court just before the dawn of day.

"We have a long march to make," said the captal, "and I cannot stop." He paused, with his eyes moodily fixed on the ground for a moment, and then added, "Albert, you shall remain behind, wait for his return, receive the papers, and bring them after me to Peronne."

Had the wishes of Albert Denyn been consulted, it is probable that he would gladly have left the task to some one else, although he was now quitting his native land with none

of those feelings of bounding joy which often fill the heart of youth at the aspect of new scenes and new adventures. He went not willingly, but he went resolved; and the very pangs that he felt on parting with those he loved best on earth made him anxious to hurry forward till all was accomplished. The lingering regrets, the wishes, the hopes—all the bright things, in short, that he was leaving behind him—were in *his* eyes as one of those fairy visions in the legends of old romance which obstruct the way of the adventurous knight in the path of duty; and he longed to break through and to quit all such illusions for ever. He knew, however, that in the present instance there was nothing left for him but to obey; and he accordingly made no further reply to his leader than a mere demand of what he was to require at the hands of the old man Walleran Urgel."

"He will know," replied the captal: "if you but say the papers that he promised me, he will give them to you at once. You shall have Martin and Grandison with you to bear you company, for these are times when it does not do to ride alone."

In the choice he had made of the two companions left with Albert Denyn, the captal had been guided by his observation of the relationships which had sprung up in the course of the march between his young follower and his old retainers. He had perceived that the two men, Martin and Grandison, though older and more experienced soldiers than Albert Denyn, had nevertheless felt the influence which his superior education gave him, and willingly submitted thereunto, courting his friendship and society, while many of the other veteran troopers looked with no small jealousy upon him whom they stigmatised as their lord's new favourite.

Although the captal was too strict a commander ever to suffer idle murmurs to affect his conduct, or even to meet his ear without reproof or punishment, he took care to avoid all cause of reasonable discontent; and, in order to show both to the youth himself and the rest of his retainers that there was a motive, independent of favour, for assigning the present task to Albert Denyn, he turned again towards his young follower, saying, "I am sure, Albert, that I can trust you as fully as even my older comrades; and in this instance you have the advantage over them, of knowing something of the country between Beauvais and Peronne."

"I knew every road and path, my lord, in days of old," replied Albert Denyn; "and I do not think that I have altogether forgotten them yet, although I got bewildered in the

forest yesterday. I will rejoin you, then, my lord, with all speed; but how long am I to wait?"

"If he come not soon, seek him," answered the captal; "but at all events set out for Peronne by to-morrow morning."

Albert Denyn promised to obey; and the great leader, who carried almost to the point of profusion the knightly virtue of liberality, took his departure, amid the reverent salutations and commendations of his host, and all the crowd of horse-boys, tapsters, and such other knaves in grain and spirit, which usually collected at the door of an inn of those days, either to welcome the coming or speed the parting guest.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE morning, which had opened unfavourably, made good all its promises of evil. Every moment the clouds overhead became darker, and the rain poured down in torrents; and for nearly a couple of hours after the departure of the captal and his band, Albert Denyn stood under the projecting doorway of his inn, gazing out in the direction of the forest, whence he expected to see Walleran Urgel make his appearance. His two companions had often tried to engage him in conversation; but though he had replied kindly and with a smile, he had so soon fallen into thought again that they had at length ceased their efforts, Martin saying to his fellow-trooper, "Leave him, leave him, Grandison! He is just upon the edge of his own land. I recollect you blubbered like a baby at the last look of the Isle of Wight; so he may well be somewhat sad on quitting his native country."

At the end of those two hours Albert Denyn seemed to suffer his impatience to get the better of him; and, after cross-questioning the people of the inn once more in regard to the old man, he proposed to his two companions to set out in search of the ancient hermitage in the wood, which had been mentioned during the morning in connection with Walleran Urgel.

Movement, activity, change, enterprise formed the life of the man-at-arms in that day. Scarcely had the suggestion passed the lips of Albert Denyn when he and his comrades,

were in the saddle and riding on towards the forest; while three or four of the horseboys of the hostelry stood and looked after them as they went, till the tall strong figures of the three horsemen and their powerful chargers became dim and indistinct, as seen through the heavy rain, and were then lost altogether amidst the glades of the forest.

Little did the youth or his comrades care for the weather; but onward they rode for several miles along the grassy roads which were cut through the wood, with the water splashing up under their horses' feet from the well soaked ground, till at length Albert, whose eyes were bent forward with a kind of apprehensive feeling which he could not account for, exclaimed—

"What is that on there before us, Grandison? It looks like the body of a man lying with the feet among the bushes."

Before his companion could bring his eyes to the spot or make any reply, the youth had spurred forward, and ascertained that his worst apprehensions were right. The corpse of Walleran Urgel lay before him, whilst the moist ground near the spot was marked with thick pools of blood. Albert sprang from his horse and raised the head of the unfortunate old man, gazing on his face in the hope of seeing some signs of animation left. All was still and calm, however—all was ashy pale, except where, from a deep gash upon the brow, a stream of red blood had run across the forehead and dabbled the long grey hair.

"Who can have done this?" exclaimed Martin, riding up, and gazing with a degree of horror upon the bloody countenance of the old man which he had never felt at the sight of death's ghastly image written in the same red characters upon youth or lusty manhood. "Who can have done this?"

"I know not," answered Albert Denyn sadly; "but it was a brutal and savage act. God forgive me if I am unchristian-like! but, I know not why, my mind turns to William Caillet. He has already proved himself base enough; and were he in Beauvoisis, I should say he had done this deed. Poor old man!" continued Albert; "it is strange what feelings I have experienced towards him, and could I discover his murderer I would have blood for blood. Where can we carry the body to, I wonder? The Castle of St. Leu cannot be far distant, and it were well to seek assistance there. Perhaps, after all, life may not be extinct. My own good lord lay for many hours among the dead at Poitiers. You two, Martin and Grandison, go on for a mile or two along this road. Through some

of the gaps you will soon see the tall grey towers of an old castle rising upon a hill. You will find a leech there: bring him down with you. I will wait here to keep the wolves from the body."

"No, no!" exclaimed the man called Grandison. "You know the country better than we do, Albert. Go on with Martin; I will stay with the corpse."

As he spoke he dismounted, and Albert, again springing on his horse, led the way in search of the Château of St. Leu, which he was not long in discovering.

In the mean while Grandison stood by the side of the body with his horse's bridle over his arm. At first he gazed upon it with those grave and sombre feelings which the solitary presence of death naturally produces even in the mind of the rude and uncultivated. Who can stand and contemplate the deserted habitation of the immortal soul without asking himself strange and moving questions regarding the mysterious link between spirit and matter, regarding all the warm relationships of life and all the cold corruption of the tomb, regarding the final state of both the mortal and immortal parts of our mixed nature? Who, in short, is there who can so look upon death without applying the sight before him to his own heart, without employing the dark hieroglyphic as a key to his own destiny?

Such feelings were, indeed, in a degree present in the breast of the stout trooper as he stood beside the dead; but his was not a character to encourage or analyse them. Even as he gazed in musing meditation he began to whistle a light air, and soon turned his eyes away, looking up and down the road, and every now and then mingling an articulate word or two of the song with the tune which poured from his compressed lips.

The hooded crow, the hooded crow
Sat on the tree by the river side,
And up and down the boat did row,
As the lover sat by the lady's side.

So sang Grandison, and then broke off and whistled some more bars of the air:—

The lover sat by the lady's side,
And much he talked of love's soft law,
And nobody heard what the dame replied;
But the hooded rook still answered "Caw!"

And again he whistled.

The boat glided down the river's course,
And the lovers were gay as gay could be;
But the hooded crow, with his accents hoarse,
Followed them still from tree to tree.

The boat glided quick o'er the glassy wave,
To where the water fall broke the flood;
And at night the lovers were still as the grave;
But the hooded crow was there at his food.

And once more Grandison whistled, and began to march up and down as if on duty at an outpost.

His music, however, was soon interrupted by various discordant shouts, coming apparently from one of the side-alleys of the wood which he and his companions had passed in their advance.

"Ay, here they come!" said he, thinking that Albert and Martin were bringing ~~down~~ some assistance from the castle; but a few moments showed him a party of country people, comprising a number of boys, advancing upon him with furious cries and gesticulations, and evidently regarding him with feelings of enmity and wrath. His surprise, which was not slight, increased when they came near, on hearing nine or ten voices accuse him loudly of the murder of the old man!

As soon as he found that such was the case, however, Grandison sprang into the saddle and grasped his lance, exclaiming, "Keep off, my men; keep off! You are all fools; but, if your folly brings you too near me, you may get a broken head."

"Seize upon him! seize upon him!" cried an old man, advancing from the crowd, in whom Grandison recognised their somewhat doubtful guide of the day before. "But there were more of them," he continued. "I saw them with my own eyes. But seize upon this one, at least, even though the others have escaped."

How the matter might have ended, had Grandison been left alone to deal with the undisciplined mob that surrounded him, cannot of course be told. It is very probable that they might have made good their object, yet not impossible that the stout man-at-arms might have drubbed them all; but in the midst of the outcry the sound of galloping horse was heard; and, to the good drooper's great satisfaction, his companion ~~and~~ Martin and Albert Denyn were seen coming down the green road at full speed, accompanied by a considerable body of

horsemen. At Albert Denyn's right hand was a noble-looking man, considerably past the middle age, whom Grandison had never beheld before, but whose name he soon learned from the exclamations of the people, who shouted as soon as they beheld him, "The Lord of St. Leu! the Lord of St. Leu!"

As the party came near, the nobleman advanced more rapidly than the rest, exclaiming, "What is all this? Why do you attack the trooper, my friends? Stand back there, I say! By the Lord, Jacques Bonhomme, I will teach you to hear!" and he struck a young peasant who was pressing forward upon Grandison a blow with his clenched fist, which levelled him to the ground. The young man rose, cowed but sullen, while one of the others exclaimed in an humble tone, "Here has been a terrible murder, my lord, and we only sought to seize the murderer and bring him up to the castle."

"That's the man! that's the man!" cried another voice.

"But there were two others! there were two others!" shouted a third from the crowd.

"Thibalt saw them! Thibalt saw them!" said a fourth.

"Who saw them?" exclaimed the Lord of St. Leu. "Who do you say?"

"Old Thibalt, my noble lord; old Thibalt la Rue," cried the man who had last spoken.

"He saw it, did he?" demanded the Lord of St. Leu in return. "That is important evidence. Stand forward, old Thibalt. Nay, sneak not away out behind. Come forward, I say. They call you 'cunning Thibalt,' I think. Now, let me see whether you can be honest Thibalt, and give me a straightforward answer. You saw the people that murdered this poor old man. Now point out to me, if you see them here, any of the persons concerned in the deed."

Thibalt was evidently disinclined to give his personal testimony before the Lord of St. Leu. He hesitated; he stammered: he was quite sure, he said, of Grandison being one of the murderers, and he then pointed to Albert Denyn and Martin as the two others.

"And you saw them commit the murder?" rejoined the Lord of St. Leu, waving his hand for Martin to hold his peace.

"Not exactly commit the murder, my good and noble lord," replied the old man in a low and humble tone; "but I saw them near the place."

"But when? but when?" exclaimed the Lord of St. Leu sharply. "I see them near the place too, and I see you there;

but that is no proof that either you or they committed the murder. When did you first behold them near the place?"

"About two hours ago, my good lord," replied Thibalt—"just at the time I heard the old man's cries for help."

"And so you were two whole hours," said the Lord of St. Leu, "before you brought the help for which he cried?"

"My lord, I could not get the people together sooner," answered the old man.

"Why came you not to the castle?" demanded the Lord of St. Leu fiercely. "Why went you not to the village? Take him, Bertrand and Hugh. Bind his arms tight, and away with him to the château of Monsieur de Plessy, for it is on his lands he lives. Tell him what has happened and what you have heard. He will easily perceive that this old fox evidently knows more of the murder than he will admit. You can say, too, that I know his charge against these men to be false; for that, hearing there was an armed party in the village, and not being aware that it was the train of the noble Capital de Buch, I sent down to watch all its movements. Yet, stay; this old man is reputed rich, is he not?"

"Oh, that he is! that he is!" cried a dozen voices from the peasantry around.

"Then I will deal with him myself," said the Lord of St. Leu, drily; "take him to the castle. Has not the leech come down yet? But the old man is evidently dead."

"I see the leech at the end of the alley, my noble lord," said one of the retainers. "He seems to put no great faith in his own powers, he is coming so slow."

"Who can have done this deed?" continued the Lord of St. Leu, gazing on the body, while two of his attendants carried off the old man Thibalt, with a pale face, towards the Château of St. Leu.

"Have you no idea? Can you form no suspicion, good youth?" he continued, addressing Albert Denyn. "You say that the murdered man accompanied the capital's train out of Touraine. Is there any one on whom your suspicions would turn?"

"I know no one, my good lord," replied Albert, "in this part of the world, who could have any motive for such a bloody act. That old man, Thibalt, indeed, seemed to have known him in days of yore, and referred to some enmity between them; but then such feeble hands as his could not have done this deed. There was one other, indeed, whose enmity this poor gentleman had provoked, but he must be far absent. Were he here, I should say he was the man who did it."

"Name him! name him!" said the Lord of St. Leu, in his usual quick and stern manner.

"He means that scoundrel William Caillet!" exclaimed Martin. "A serf, my good lord, who tried ——"

"I know, I know!" rejoined the Lord of St. Leu. "My good friend the Count de Mauvinet sent me a messenger to tell me all, and bade me keep a strict watch in Beauvoisis, lest that base villain should seek refuge in these parts. So," he continued, turning to Albert Denyn, "you deem that, were he here, we might reasonably suspect him of the murder of this old man?"

"I do, my lord, I do," replied Albert boldly. "Poor Walleran Urgel crossed him in his purposes, and by his timely coming saved my noble lord's daughter from the brutal violence of that very Caillet. It was an act which he would not soon forgive, and were he in Beauvoisis I should believe he is the man who has done this."

"He is in Beauvoisis," said the Lord of St. Leu, with a dark smile. "I have certain information that he is here. Not many miles distant from this very spot, he has been seen twice by those who knew him well; and even now my people are watching for him, that he may not escape the punishment of his offences. Doubtless we shall soon discover whether this crime is also to be added to the number. What say you, leech? is the man dead?"

The surgeon who had been brought down from the castle, and who, during the last few words spoken by the Lord of St. Leu, had been examining carefully the body of Walleran Urgel, now raised his head to reply, with a look of great gravity and sagacity. "My lord," he answered, "it is a very difficult thing to say what is death and what is not."

"Pshaw!" cried the Lord of St. Leu; "I ask you, will that man ever get up from that grass and walk?"

"Not till the day of judgment," replied the leech.

"Then the man is dead!" exclaimed the Lord of St. Leu. "Out upon philosophy! It is *truth* I want. Take up the body and carry it to the castle. You, too, good youth, and your companions, had better speed on at once after the noble Captal de Buch, as he left you to look for this old man, to whom you can now render no farther service. Tell him what has happened, and say that, if he wishes to investigate the matter himself, a hearty welcome awaits him at St. Leu."

"But, my lord," replied Albert Denyn, "the object of our stay was to obtain some papers which this poor gentleman had promised to my good lord the captal."

"Let the body be searched," interrupted the Lord of St. Leu; "Let the body be searched, so that you can make your own report, youth, to your lord."

The corpse was searched accordingly, but nothing of any kind was found amongst the clothes; and Albert Denyn, satisfied that poor Walleran Urgel had been plundered as well as murdered, took his leave of the Lord of St. Leu, and, according to the directions he had received, rode on to rejoin the capital.

The body of Walleran Urgel was raised by the attendants of the Lord of St. Leu, and carried towards the castle, while some of the peasantry followed the nobleman and his train as they rode slowly back, and the rest remained gathered together round the spot, discussing the events that had taken place, and secretly declaring among themselves that the real murderers had been suffered to depart, and that the crime, in order to shield them, had been attributed to those who had nothing to do with it. Such were the suspicious whispered amongst the crowd; but there was one who ventured to go farther than any of his comrades. The young peasant, whom the Lord of St. Leu had somewhat brutally struck down, clenched his fist tight as he saw the nobleman and his train depart, and muttered between his teeth, "The time will come!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

SOME time had passed; the weather had cleared up again; the heavens were soft and bright; the sun shone out; and though there was a light winter's mist lying in the low grounds, it scarcely interrupted the eye that ran over the scene around, but only served to soften the principal features of the landscape, and to give a vague vastness of the whole by blending the distance insensibly with the sky.

Upon one of the highest hills in that part of the country, which, though not mountainous, is rich in graceful undulations, stood a small chapel, with a cottage hard by tenanted by the officiating priest. It was reached by a winding path issuing from the deep woods below; but the chapel itself stood bare upon a small esplanade, overtopping everything around it; and high above the little bellry appeared the symbol of man's salvation, at the foot of which lay the old

emblem of an anchor—meaning, perhaps, to represent Faith arising out of Hope.

On the day we speak of, various groups of peasantry were seen winding up the tortuous road. They consisted almost altogether of men—hard-featured, gaunt, hollow-eyed peasants—on whose faces and garments appeared sad signs of misery and want, labour, exposure, and distress. Such traces were common to the countenances of all; but every different shade of expression was there besides, and by the aspect one might see how each man bore his burden. There was the downcast eager gaze upon the ground, which seemed despairingly to ask the stones for bread. There was the gay and laughing misery which sets despondency at defiance. There was the calm firm look of resolute endurance. There was the wild yet sullen stare of fierce discontent, seeking the object of its hatred from under the bent eyebrows. Some of them spoke together as they came; some of them chattered quickly and gesticulated vehemently; some advanced in deep silence, apparently buried in the thoughts of their own sorrow. The object of all, however, was the same. A whisper had gone through the miserable peasantry in the neighbourhood of Claremont, Beauvais, and St. Len, that a meeting of some of those who suffered most severely under the horrors and privations of the time was to take place, for the purpose of bewailing their misery and praying to God in that chapel for some alleviation of the load which had fallen upon them. With whom the rumour originated no one appeared to know, but it seemed to have been universal through the country, and the day and the hour had been named exactly to every one. No one had been summoned—no one had been called—but all had heard that such a meeting was to be held, and all went to join their sorrows to those of men who suffered like themselves.

The good old priest had not been made aware that any such assembly was proposed, though the poor of the neighbourhood had often asked him to petition God for some relief, and the worthy man had never failed to do so, both in his secret orisons and in the public service of the chapel. He was not a little surprised, then, to see from his windows, about the hour of mass, so great a number of the peasantry approaching his lonely habitation; for his ordinary congregation rarely amounted to more than twenty or thirty, and now two or three hundred men were evidently climbing the hills. "Poor people!" he said to himself; "poor people! their misery brings them to God. A sad pity it is that gratitude

for happiness is not as strong a motive as terror or expectation, but so it is with our earthly nature. We must be driven rather than led. We need the scourge of sorrow, and forget the Almighty too soon in the very prosperity which he has given."

Thus saying, he hastened into the chapel, which soon overflowed with people, and the mass began, and proceeded reverently to a close. In a prayer to God—introduced perhaps somewhat irregularly—the priest spoke of the sorrows of the peasantry of France, of the misery which they had so long endured, of the scourges of all kinds under which they suffered, and he besought some speedy and effectual relief.

The multitude listened to the prayer; but, if the ordinary service of the mass had soothed and consoled them, the mention of their disastrous situation seemed to revive all their anguish; and when they quitted the chapel and had assembled on the little esplanade which we have mentioned, their minds were full of their wretchedness, and many real and many fancied causes of discontent were busy in their imaginations.

As they issued forth they broke into separate groups, according as they found friends or acquaintances, and each little knot went on to detail griefs and privations enough to make the heart sick and the blood run cold. Gradually, however, the more angry and vehement speakers drew the attention of listeners from the groups around. The whole numbers collected were speedily gathered into three or four parties. The voice of lamentation and sorrow was changed into complaint and murmuring, and curses deep and strong against the oppressors burst from the lips of the oppressed.

The good priest had mingled with them to soothe and to console; but when he heard the turn which the people's words were taking, he endeavoured to pacify and to calm, and even ventured upon expostulation and reproof. He showed that many of the statements of wrongs suffered were as false as the miseries endured were true; and he was endeavouring to prove that some of the charges brought against the nobles were unfounded, when a loud voice, proceeding from a man who had not yet spoken, stopped him in the midst.

"Get thee hence!" said a tall peasant covered from head to foot with the grey cloak of a shepherd, the hood of which hung far over his face, concealing the features from view. "Get thee hence, good priest! This is no moment for thee; thou art a man of peace, and hast done thy mission. Get

thence hence, I say. But who is this riding so fast up the hill? The bailiff of the Lord of St. Leu, with one of his archers, come to say that we shall not even tell our miseries to God, I suppose."

All eyes were now turned in the direction of the road, on which was seen approaching a stout, well-fed, portly-looking man on horseback, followed by an archer on foot. The latter, besides his usual arms, bore a partisan on his shoulder, and as far as beard and ugliness went, he was as forbidding a personage and bore as formidable an appearance as can well be conceived. Nor was the countenance of the bailiff of the Lord of St. Leu very prepossessing; not that the features were in themselves bad, but there was withal a look of insolent and domineering pride, a fat scorn for all things more miserable and meagre than himself, which certainly was not at all calculated to conciliate the affection of the starving peasantry of the neighbourhood. Thus, as he rode up, many a murmured comment on his insolent tyranny passed through the people who watched his approach.

Such are the men who make their fords hated; for very, very often the detestation of their inferiors falls upon persons in high station, without any actual oppression on their own part. Nevertheless, let them not think themselves ill-treated if the acts of their agents draw down upon their heads the enmity of those whom they have not themselves trampled on; for power and wealth bring with them a great responsibility, and demand at our hands a watchfulness over the conduct of others as well as our own; so that the man whose servant is suffered to use his authority for the purpose of oppression is little less culpable than the oppressor himself.

The Lord of St. Leu, as times went, was neither a tyrant nor an unjust man: his morality was not very strict; and in cases of offences committed within his jurisdiction, though he certainly did not suffer the guilty to escape, yet he contrived when it was possible to make the punishment profitable to himself. He was fonder, in short, of fines than of bloodshed, and preferred making a culprit pay in pocket rather than in person. To a certain degree he was kind to the poor, often supplied them with food and commiserated their distresses; but he was quick and severe when opposed, and stern in his general demeanour. His greatest crime was the license which he allowed his inferior officers, who committed many a wrong and many a cruelty without his knowledge, but it cannot be said without his fault.

Amongst the most detested of these subordinate tyrants was the bailiff of St. Leu; not that he was more cruel than others, but he was more insolent in his cruelty. People will bear tyranny more easily than scorn; and the secret why some of the greatest tyrants that ever lived have gone on to the end of their lives uninjured and unopposed, has generally been, that they gained to their side the vanity of those whom they oppressed, rather than arrayed it against them.

The peasantry assembled before the chapel on the top of the hill drew back on either side as the bailiff advanced, but without showing any disposition to fly; and indeed, had he examined closely, he might have seen some cause for apprehension in the sullen looks of some, and the fierce, wild expression of others. In those days, however, the idea of anything like resistance on the part of the serfs had never entered into the minds of the nobles of France. They regarded the villeins, as they called them, as the mere creatures of their will. If they treated them well, it was merely from general kindness of heart and natural good feeling; if they abstained from oppressing and actually ill-using them, when they had any inclination so to do, it was simply on account of some respect for the few laws which gave them a scanty protection; but no idea that the worm might turn on him who trampled it ever entered into the calculation of the lords of the soil. A terrible day of retribution, however, was now coming, and the bailiff of the Lord of St. Leu was the one to hurry it on.

"How now, Jacques Bonhommes?" he exclaimed; "what are you doing here in such a crowd? Why get ye not to your labour? What are ye doing here in idleness?"

"We have been praying God to deliver us from evil," replied a voice from the crowd.

"Away with you! away with you!" cried the insolent officer; "think you that God will attend to such scum as you are? But first let me see whom you have got amongst you; march down that road, every man of you, one by one."

"Why should we do that?" demanded one of the boldest amongst the peasantry, "or why should you meddle with us, when we are praying to the only ear that will hear us?"

"Insolent villain!" exclaimed the bailiff, striking him a slight blow with a truncheon he carried in his hand. "Dare you put questions to me?"

The man drew back with a frowning brow, but made no reply; and the bailiff continued: "I will answer you, however. Here, archer, take my horse;" and throwing the rein

to his follower, he slowly dismounted from his horse, while a little group at the other side of the crowd were seen eagerly conversing together.

"Now, then," said the bailiff, "pass on before me, one by one; for there is a criminal amongst you, who, having first committed felony against his lord, has fled hither to add murder to his other crimes. You all know him well, and his name is William Caillet. Come, quick! pass before me one by one, and each man let me see his face as he goes by."

The people paused and hesitated; but at that moment the person who had spoken to the priest, and who was, as we have said, covered from head to foot with a shepherd's grey cloak and hood, advanced slowly and deliberately from the other side of the crowd, as if to lead the way in passing before the bailiff of St. Leu. Several others of those who were near followed close behind him; and when he approached the place where the officer stood, the bailiff, although there was something in the man's demeanour which evidently struck and disconcerted him, exclaimed aloud, "Come, come, throw back your hood!"

The peasant made no reply, but took another step forward, and then turning suddenly face to face with the bailiff, he threw the cloak off entirely, and stood out before the eyes of all, the very William Caillet whom the officer had demanded!

"Now, what want you with me?" demanded Caillet.

"To apprehend you for a felony," replied the officer, boldly.

"Then take that for thy pains!" exclaimed Caillet, striking him a blow in the face, which made him reel back. "Cut-throat slave of a bloody tyrant! take that! and that!—and that!" as, drawing the sword with which he was armed, he plunged it again and again into the body of the bailiff before the unhappy man, taken by surprise, had power to do more than grasp the hilt of his sword convulsively. Ere he could pluck it from the sheath his spirit had fled for ever, and almost at the same instant the peasant called Jacques Morne had sprung upon the archer, exclaiming—

"Tear him to pieces! Down with the monster! Down with the nobles, and all the bloody tyrants who keep us without bread!"

The archer, however, was more upon his guard than his officer had been, and, shortening his partisan, he struck Morne a blow upon the head, which, though it did not kill him, laid him bleeding and senseless at his feet. Ere he could do more, Caillet, seeing that the bailiff could offer no further resistance

to any one, turned also to the archer and strode over the prostrate body of Morne. The soldier aimed a fierce stroke at him, likewise; but Caillet was far superior to him both in skill and strength, and parrying it, in a moment he struck him a blow upon the shoulder, which would have cleft him to the waist had he not been protected by his brigantine. Notwithstanding that defence, it wounded him severely, and brought him at once upon his knees; but Caillet drew back with a scornful smile, and exclaiming to the peasants, "If ever he rise again, it is your fault," he thrust his sword back into the sheath.

The people rushed upon the unfortunate man in a crowd, bore him down to the earth, and in a moment they had literally torn him to pieces.

The priest placed his hands over his eyes for an instant to shut out the dreadful sight; but taking them away again, he raised them up to heaven, exclaiming, "Oh, man of blood! man of blood! you have brought down a new curse upon the land!"

"I have brought it deliverance!" cried Caillet, in his voice of thunder. "Get thee to prayers, good priest; get thee to prayers! Pray unto God for his blessing upon the course which has been begun this day; pray for strength to those arms that are now raised to deliver their country; pray for resolution to those hearts which have undertaken the great work of restoring to mankind the liberty which is man's birth-right!"

The few words which had passed between the priest and Caillet had afforded the people time to think for a moment over the act which had just been done, or rather to see clearly the situation in which they had so suddenly been placed; and strange and terrible were the contending sensations excited in their bosoms. The long habit of submission and fear of their lords had given way for an instant to the impulse of momentary passion; but as soon as the deed to which the passion had prompted was accomplished, the feeling of awe returned, and with it the terror of punishment. They recoiled in a mass from the mangled body of the archer, and they gazed with feelings of horror and affright on the bloody work they had made.

Quick, however, to catch and take advantage of the passing feelings of the moment, Caillet perceived at once what was passing in the minds of the peasantry: he saw that apprehension of their lord's vengeance was for the time uppermost, and he determined to use that very apprehension to

counteract its natural effects. He looked on them sternly, then, for a short space, while they turned their eyes from the dead bodies towards him.

"See what you have done!" he said, in a voice which was heard by every one present; "see what you have done! You have slain one of the Lord of St. Leu's archers. You have torn him to pieces. You cannot hide the deed, for too many have witnessed it. You cannot justify it, for he will hear no justification: he will neither pardon nor spare. To-morrow his men-at-arms and his archers will be amongst you; and there is not a man here but myself who will not be hanging up to some of the oak-trees of the forest before sunset to-morrow night. You have done a terrible and unheard-of thing—a thing that was never known in France before. It is true, you have been goaded to desperation; it is true, you have been trampled on, and misused, and ground to the dust; it is true, you have been kept in starvation and misery by men no better than yourselves; it is true, you have seen your wives and children die of want and cold; your lives have been one endless sorrow, and your existence but a length of drudgery and pain; it is true that human patience could endure no more; that the insolence of your tyrants added insult, and scorn, and contempt, and cruelty to wretchedness, and penury, and affliction! But will your persecutors spare you on that account? Will they have pity because you were driven by wrongs that no creatures on the earth could bear; under which a timid hare would find courage, against which a worm would turn? Oh, no, no! deceive yourselves not, my friends; they will neither spare nor forgive. They know the interests of their own tyranny too well: they know that, if once you find resistance in any case successful, you will regain your rights and liberties; that you will take back with a strong hand that of which they have robbed you; that their fine castles, and glorious lands, and rich furniture, and dainty food, will all be yours; that you will no longer consent to be oppressed and trampled on; that the rod with which they have ruled you is broken, and their power gone for ever. They know it, I say—they know it; and why do they know it? Because they know you are many and they are few; that you are strong by endurance and labour, and that they are weak; that you are brave, and that they are cowardly: ay, cowardly, I say. See how a handful of the English scattered their millions like a flock of sheep at Poitiers! See how a few bands of adventurers ravage the land without their daring to oppose them! So would you scatter them if you chose it; so may you ravage

their lands, if you do not prefer to submit your necks to the halter, and pay for the death of yon minion of tyranny with your lives. To them, to them alone, is attributable all the evils which we endure: first to their oppression, then to their folly, then to their cowardice. Will you stand tamely and bend your heads to the blood-thirsty monsters who have devoured you, or will you boldly follow me to punish them for their misdeeds? to burn their castles, to ravage their lands, to smite the smiter, and to feed upon the fruits that they have torn from you?"

"We will! we will!" cried Jacques Morne; and, excited by the vehement oratory of Caillet to a pitch of wild enthusiasm such as they had never before felt, a number of the peasants echoed, "We will! we will!"

"Will you follow me," reiterated Caillet, "to avenge the wrongs that you have suffered, and to taste all the pleasures that have been denied to you? Will you follow me to wipe out in blood and flame the memory of long years of suffering and oppression? Choose your course, and choose at once; and think not that I try to lead you to violence in order to shield my own head; for there is not a man here who is not even now in greater danger than I am. I have known how to protect myself, and I can protect myself still, against all the lords in the land. They cannot hurt me, they can do me no harm; but I ask you, is there one man here, after what you have done to-day, who can ever lay down his head in safety? Are you not aware that the rope is round your necks? Are you not aware that it must be your own hands and your own knives that cut it?"

"We are! we are!" exclaimed a hundred voices around; "we will follow you; we will follow you to death!"

"No, not to death," cried Caillet, in an exulting tone; "to life, to liberty, to enjoyment, to revenge—to everything that man can hope for and desire! Oh, thou bloody spectacle!" he continued, addressing the dead body at his foot, "I thank thee, for the sight of thee has roused my country to shake off the chains that bound her! I thank thee, for the sight of thee has given back to my countrymen their hearts of lions! Let us spend no more time in vain words. I long ago, my men, and you this day, have done deeds that bar us from all retreat. We must conquer our liberty or die. Let us strike then at once; let us this very hour perform some other great act which may fill the hearts of our enemies with fear."

"But," said one of those timid counsellors who so often, in

moments of excitement and enthusiasm, throw a damp upon the brightest ardour—"but we are here not more than two hundred men, without arms, without assistance."

"But two hundred men!" exclaimed Caillet, with a frowning brow and a loud voice; "I tell you that by my voice speak all the peasantry of France. I tell you that the castle which I will set in flames this night—ay, though it be perched upon a rock and defended by triple walls—shall serve but as a beacon to call forth the millions of the nation to join with us in punishing their oppressors. No arms, did the man say? Have you not knives?—have you not the knives with which the commons of France have more than once routed the enemies of their land? Have you not scythes, weapons more terrible than all the lances of your enemies? Let each man seize his scythe, then, and follow me; I will teach him to mow down harvests such as he has never reaped before. Take such arms as are nearest at hand for the time being, and we will soon snatch from the hands of our enemies the swords they have too long used against ourselves. No assistance, did he say? I tell you, you shall have the best assistance in the world: you, the peasantry of France, shall be aided by all the citizens of France. The people of Paris are already in revolt, and the commons of every other town only wait our signal to rise as one man. Then, then a few thousand nobles, cooped up in their strongholds and besieged by millions of their injured countrymen, shall pay the penalty of their long and terrible crimes, washing out in blood the stains they have fixed upon the land; and may destruction fall upon them all, except such as frankly come over and join the people! Now then, let those who will follow me, for we have already wasted much time; and this night you shall have the first taste of that glorious revenge of which you shall drink deep day by day, till the whole be accomplished. But, if there be one man amongst you who has not been injured by these nobles—if there be one man whose children have been suffered to know plenty, or one even who thinks that after the death of that archer we can obtain peace and forgiveness—let him stay away, and take part with those whom we devote to destruction. We want none but such as have willing hearts and ready hands; for the multitudes throughout all France that are prepared to join us—the thousands that I have seen on the banks of the Loire, cursing and scoffing at the coward nobles as they fled from Poitiers—will put all resistance at defiance, and in a few days make us masters of the country. Whither shall we go? what place shall we first attack? Let

it be the Castle of St. Leu: it is strong and full of men, and will be a glorious conquest. There, too, is confined good old Thibalt la Rue, whom they have accused of a murder that he did not commit, simply because they knew that he wished the people to rise and throw off their tyranny."

"No, no!" cried a voice; "he is not there: they moved him from St. Leu nearly a fortnight ago, and took him to Plessy en Val, because he lived upon those lands. He is in the tower of the Lord of Plessy, by the stream."

"Let us go thither, then," exclaimed Caillet; "that will be an easy conquest, and perhaps we may have time to take the Castle of St. Leu also before night."

Every strong feeling of the human heart is more or less infectious; and, unless guarded against its influence by some counteracting passion in our own bosom, we can hardly help participating in any sensation which we see powerfully displayed by another. Every word, every look, every gesture of Caillet was full of strength, and confidence, and determination; and there was not one person in the crowd that surrounded him who did not feel his own energies rise, his own fears decrease, his own courage glow, as he listened to, and marked the extraordinary man who stood before him. Even the cold counsellor who had been the first to think of difficulties and impediments was carried away by the words he heard, and exclaimed with the rest, "Lead on, lead on! We will follow you."

"Forward, then!" exclaimed Caillet; "forward towards Plessy; and as we go, let us call out our fellow-men to aid us in our enterprise."

Thus saying, he led the way down the hill with a rapid step. The crowd followed him to a man; and no one but the good old priest gazed after them as they rushed away into the paths of the forest.

CHAPTER XXV.

THERE was a man singing at his work, and two or three children playing about the door, while a mother sat within rocking a wicker cradle with her foot, and twirling the busy distaff with her hands, in the little village of peasants' huts which lay at the distance of about a mile from the tower of Plessy en Val. The short afternoon was drawing towards its close, and the evening light of a bright day in the beginning of the year shone calmly upon the peaceful scene; the woods swept up over the neighbouring hills, the tall donjon of the castle was seen rising over the trees, and there was a sort of misty calmness in the aspect of all things, which communicated a sweet and tranquil feeling to the mind.

Merrily worked on the contented labourer, watching the gambols of his babes, and speaking from time to time a word to his wife within. Suddenly some unusual sound caused the man to look up and turn towards the road which came out of the wood. The noise was a very peculiar one: neither cry, nor shout, nor human voice was heard; but there was the quick tramp of many feet, blended with the buzz of a number of people speaking in a low tone.

"What is all this?" said the peasant, raising himself to his full height and leaning on the axe with which he had been hewing into shape a large mass of oak. "What is all this, Jeanette? Here's a crowd of several hundred men coming down, as fast as they can come without running. A number of the good folks of St. Leu I see, and some of the people from Beauvais; there is Jacques Morne, too, and long Phillipe of Argenton, and some of the serfs of Beaulieu; but who is that at their head with a sword in his hand? On my life, I believe it is the felon, William Caillet! They must be about some mischief."

A minute more brought the first men of the crowd to the entrance of the village, and the loud voice of Caillet exclaimed in a tone of command, "Take your axe on your shoulder, and join us to deliver France from her tyrants!"

"I beg your pardon, Master Caillet," replied the man to whom he had addressed himself; "I never join people without knowing what they are going to be about."

"To deliver France, I tell you," answered Caillet sternly. "Ay, ay," cried the peasant; "but how? How are you going to begin?"

"By burning down the Castle of Plessy, and setting free good old Thibault la Rue," growled forth Jacques Morne. "Waste not many words upon him, Caillet: I told you all the people here are willing slaves."

"I am an honest man, at all events," replied the peasant boldly; "and I will have no hand in burning down the castle of my good lord, or setting free an old rogue who never left us at peace while he was amongst us. Think what you are about, my men," he continued, addressing the followers of Caillet. "Think what you are about, and where these people are leading you."

"Take that for your pains!" cried Jacques Morne, plunging a knife into his throat; and as the unfortunate man fell back, weltering in his blood, Caillet exclaimed, "So die all the willing slaves of the tyrants of our country! Disperse through the houses; gather all the arms and the tools that you can get, and let us on as fast as possible."

In a moment every cabin was invaded, and a general pillage began; some men were found in the houses who willingly joined the insurgents—some, it may be supposed, followed the example of the peasant whom the insurgents had first met; and more than once a scream, or a deep groan, or a supplication for mercy, issued from the doors of the huts, telling how well the orders which had been given were obeyed. When the crowd again began to move on, flames were bursting from various parts of the village, and a few women and children were seen flying in terror and agony towards the woods. It required but five minutes to change a sweet and peaceful place into a scene of blood and devastation.

Caillet himself had entered none of the houses, but stood for a short time in the midst of the road, with his right hand still grasping his naked sword and his left pressed tight upon his brow. At length he shouted to his followers to come forth; and as they obeyed that loud and echoing voice, he led them on without looking behind.

Forward they rushed through a narrow, winding lane, with a small stream crossing it in the bottom of the valley; but ~~as~~ the multitude had proceeded half-a-mile, swelling their numbers by some peasants who had been working in the

fields, they were suddenly met by the white-haired Lord of Plessy and three attendants, galloping down at full speed towards the village, the flames of which had been observed from the watch-tower of the castle. The good old baron was all eagerness to give aid to his people in the calamity under which he thought they were suffering, and he was within twenty or thirty yards of Caillet and his followers before he saw the threatening aspect of the crowd.

At that moment, however, the thundering voice of the leader of the insurrection exclaimed, somewhat too soon for his own purpose, "This is one of the tyrants! Upon him, upon him, my men, and tear him to pieces!" And he himself rushed forward to seize the bridle of the old lord.

But one of the nobleman's attendants spurred forward his horse before his master, exclaiming, "Fly, my lord, fly! We are too few to resist." The Lord of Plessy and the rest, confused and astounded, and guessing but vaguely what had occurred, turned their horses and fled at full speed towards the castle, while the furious mob darted upon the gallant servant who had sacrificed himself for his master, and ere he could strike three strokes in his own defence, had pulled him from his horse and dashed out his brains with an axe.

Caillet caught by the bridle the beast the man had ridden, and sprang at once into the saddle, exclaiming, "Follow me quickly! we must not lose our advantage. If you delay a moment you will have to choose another leader;" and thus saying, he galloped on at full speed after the Lord of Plessy and his attendants.

The crowd who came behind quickened their speed and hurried forward as fast as possible; but they could not keep pace with Caillet, and at the turn of the road which led up towards the castle, lost sight of him altogether. Some anxiety and apprehension took possession of them and made them waver for a moment; but Jacques Morne, waving a heavy axe over his head, exclaimed, "Run, men, run! Why do you pause? If you hesitate he will be killed before we are there."

Onward they rushed again, and in a few minutes more the barbican of the castle was before them. The sight that they there saw renewed their courage and roused them into fury. Caillet himself had reached the place almost at the same moment with its lord, and to ensure that the gates of the outwork should not be shut, had sprung from the horse which bore him, and plunged his sword into the animal's chest. Falling dead under the archway, the carcass blocked up the way, and both served as a rampart for the bold man who stood there

unsupported against the armed followers of the feudal chief, and prevented the portcullis from falling completely, or the heavy door beyond from being closed.

All was confusion and bustle in the gate, though only a few of the usual guards had as yet arrived. Some were endeavouring to drag the horse away, some were striking at Caillet with swords and partisans, some were calling for cross-bows and quarrels to shoot him as he stood; but as the head of the rushing multitude appeared and came on with a wild yell of rage and exultation, a panic seized upon the soldiery, and abandoning the barbican and the drawbridge, they sought for safety within the walls of the castle itself.

"Victory! victory!" shouted Caillet: "we have won the first triumph. On, on, my men, and the place will soon be ours!"

The crowd rushed forward; the portcullis, which had partly fallen, was soon raised; the barbican was rifled of the various weapons it contained; and, defended by some shields and casques which had belonged to the soldiery of the place, Caillet and seven of his followers passed the drawbridge, in spite of the arrows and quarrels which were now showered thickly upon them from the walls. Each man bore with him a load of fagots and wood, which had been found in the outwork, laid up as the warder's winter provision; and a pile was soon raised against the chief gate of the castle, as high as could be reached. No light, however, was to be had for some minutes; and when at length one of the peasants, with a flint and steel, contrived to kindle a flame, an arrow from a projecting turret struck his shoulder and pierced him to the heart. A loud shout of satisfaction burst from the man who had discharged the shaft, and some signs of terror showed themselves amongst the insurgents, at the first appearance of death amongst themselves. But Caillet boldly thrust himself forward into the very aim of the archer, and shaking his clenched hand at him, exclaimed, "In this fire will I burn thy heart! Revenge, revenge, my friends! The blood of our brother calls out to us for revenge. Let us spread around the castle while the flame burns down the gate; perhaps we may find some speedier way in."

His wish was but to occupy the peasantry while the fire did its work; for he knew well that men unaccustomed to warfare are with difficulty brought to wait in inactivity while any preliminary operation is carried on, especially when they are exposed to danger during the delay. Part, then, he left to watch the burning of the gate under cover of the barbican; the rest

he led round the castle, affecting to seek another point of entrance. In the mean while, the Lord of Plessy and his attendants, astounded by what had occurred, confused, terrified, and utterly unprepared to offer vigorous resistance to an attack which had never been anticipated, lost much time in wild and hurried consultations; and it was not till the fire had made considerable progress that they thought of pouring down water upon it through the machicoulis. Several minutes more were spent in bringing it up from the well to the tower above the gate; and then it was found that the stream unfortunately fell beyond the spot where the flame was raging, and that the water flowed away into the moat.

By this time it was evident that, notwithstanding the plating of iron, the wood-work of the door was beginning to ignite, and another hurried and confused consultation took place, in which some one proposed to parley with the assailants and try to make some terms. The old lord himself, however, refused to hear of such a disgraceful act; and it was resolved to open the gate for a moment, and, rushing out, endeavour to throw the flaming pile into the ditch.

Unhappily for the besieged, at the instant this determination was executed, Caillet himself had returned from his progress round the walls. He had passed the drawbridge, with Jacques Morne and another, to see what had been the effect of the flame upon the doors, and, notwithstanding the intense heat, was standing almost in the blaze, when the gate was thrown open and the old lord with ten or twelve men rushed out, scattering the fire before them. For a moment Caillet and his companions were driven back some steps; but his quick and daring mind instantly conceived the object of the enemy, and he determined to turn their attempt to his own advantage. Suddenly those who were watching under the barbican lost sight of him and his comrades in the midst of the smoke and flame, but the next moment the bold insurgents and their leader appeared again, striking on all sides, and literally surrounded by fire and enemies. At the same time the voice of Caillet was heard shouting aloud, "The gate is won! the gate is won! On, on, my men, and the castle is ours!"

With a wild yell of triumph the multitude rushed across the bridge, and bearing all before them, entered the castle of Plessy together with its devoted lord and his followers. Resistance was now vain; for the numbers of the assailants exceeded so terribly those of the defenders of the castle, that the lack of arms and discipline was far more than compen-

sated. One or two of the men of Plessy, struck with panic, threw down their weapons and declared they would surrender, forgetting that the enemy had none of the conventional feelings and principles of action which are to be found amongst regular soldiery. They had now, however, a terrible lesson to learn—that those who know no mercy will be shown to them if defeated, show no mercy themselves when successful. The offer to surrender, the cries for quarter, were met by knives in the throats or in the hearts of the defeated garrison. Those who were not killed by the first blow were trodden to death under the feet of the multitude, which, rushing vehemently forward one man behind an other, drove all before them or trampled down without mercy those that fell. On, on they poured, through the courts and narrow passages of the castle, slaying without remorse all the men they found; and still in the front of the brutal crowd was the tall and powerful form of William Caillet, casting himself upon any who yet dared to resist, and accomplishing in a moment by skill of arms what his rude followers sometimes failed to do by force. On, on they poured, deluging the pavement with blood, strewing the court-yards with corpses, and shouting with savage delight at every head that fell, till at length the lower part of the castle was entirely cleared; and up the narrow staircase in the keep they rushed, led on by Caillet and some of the most fierce and determined of his comrades.

Here, however, the last desperate opposition was prepared for them. The Lord of Plessy himself and his few surviving followers stood side by side at the top of the first flight of steps, determined to keep that narrow passage so long as an arm could wave or a heart could beat. They ranged themselves in double row, the first rank armed with swords and battle-axes, and the men behind passing their shortened lances between their companions in front. It was an awful moment, but each heart was armed with something more than courage. The women and the children were above; and they who had hitherto fought with resolute valour for their own lives, now struck for what was dearer still—for the best, brightest, dearest gifts of human existence. "There is hope," said the Lord of Plessy, as he took his station—"there is still hope while one man guards this staircase! The news of the attack will soon be known; people will come to our rescue from St. Leu and Clermont, and we shall save the women and children. Let some one above hang out a black flag from the top of the tower. Hark! the wretches are rushing up!" As he spoke, a tall, athletic man, who had been the black-

smith at St. Leu, rushed past Caillet to be first in the work of butchery; but while he was still ascending, the old noble took a step forward, raised his battle-axe in the air, and struck the broad, swarthy brow of the insurgent with the clear, sharp edge of the weapon, felling him to the ground like an ox under the blow of the butcher. His brains strewed the stone steps as Caillet and Jacques Morne ascended; and the dauntless aspect of the old lord and his companions made even the bold leader of the insurgents pause for a moment, to think how he might best attack them.

The means that suggested themselves were like the man who hesitated not to seize them. "Cover my head, Jacques Morne," he cried, and bending down he raised the yet warm and quivering form of the dead man in his strong arms.

The Lord of Plessy viewed him with a scornful smile, thinking that he was going to bear the corpse away; but heaving it up with his full strength, Caillet cast it at once upon the spears and axes of the men above, and then rushed forward sword in hand into the midst, before they could strike him from above. The rest of the insurgents sprang after him, shouting their triumph, and in three minutes the white hair of the old baron lay dabbled with gore amongst the corpses of his gallant followers.

The insurgents paused not in their work. There was a door on the other side of the landing, towards which they ran at once. They found it fastened strongly on the inside, but it was instantly dashed open; and a large chamber or upper hall presented itself, at the farther side of which stood some seven or eight women, with their eyes fixed in an agony of terror upon the opening door. In the middle was a young lady of noble mien, with her hands clasped and three children clinging round her knees. The moment she saw the faces of the insurgents, she uttered a shrill cry, and looked behind her as if for some means of escape. There was none; and the next impulse brought her to the feet of Caillet, exclaiming, "Have pity! have pity! You have killed my father; my husband has long been dead: slay me too if you will; but, oh! spare my children!"

Caillet paused and put his hand to his head, while those who followed him rushed on towards the shrieking group at the other side of the room. He seemed to hesitate for a moment; but the instant after, muttering to himself, "They must be bound by deeds that can never be forgiven," he spurned the lady from him, exclaiming, "I slay you not, but I will not save you!" and turned towards the door, leaving

his infuriated followers, mad with blood and lust, to work their horrid will upon the defenceless beings who were now all that remained alive of the former numerous inhabitants of the castle.

Shriek after shriek rang from the hall, as Caillet forced his way out through the multitude who were thronging into it; and as soon as he was in the open air, he paused and listened, till the cries of agony and horror ceased; and then, while a loud, hoarse laugh from some human demon succeeded, he muttered, "There is no retreat for them now! They are mine for ever!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

A VICTORY achieved—what a grand thing it is, a victory achieved! In any course of action, moral or physical, whether it be in the strife of contending thousands, in the daily battle-field of our rivalry with other men, in the fierce and bitter struggle with our own passions, or in our warfare against the stern opposition of circumstances, a victory gained is always a grand thing that bears up the heart, like a triumphant general upon the shields of his conquering soldiery. But even in the ordinary conflicts of hostile armies, cases will occur when the successful commander, while shouts of success ring around and Glory prepares her laurel for his brow, lies writhing in the agony of wounds and shattered limbs, with the frowning image of death before his eyes, ready to snatch the wreath from off his head.

Thus stood William Caillet in the court of the Castle of Plessy: the victory was won—a double victory, for it was not only that he had triumphed over the foes that opposed him, but likewise over the supporters who followed him. He had trampled the one under his feet, he had bound the others to his cause with chains that they could not break; but still out of the strife he had come wounded and shattered, not in limbs and in body, but in spirit and in heart. The dark end of all, the sure damnation of the future, was for a moment before his eyes: and the consciousness of having accomplished the first great triumphant step in the career that he had longed for, scarcely made up for the fiery agony of the means by which it was worked out. Each blow that he had struck, each step that he had taken, seemed to have crushed some of

those better feelings that linger like reluctant angels to the very last, long after all hope of repentance and reformation seems extinguished, and the pangs of their parting came upon him along with the exultation of victory.

He stood for more than a minute, then, in deep thought, at the foot of the staircase; and a minute in the midst of such scenes is equal to years at any other period. He was interrupted at last, however, by one of those who were hurrying about through the courts, in the chambers, and amongst the corridors of the castle, inquiring, with an unsated appetite for blood, if there were any more to slay.

"Where go you, Caillet?" demanded the man, as his leader took a step forward on seeing him approach.

"I go to set free old Thibalt la Rue," replied Caillet.

"He is in the little tower at the end of the court," said the peasant; "I saw his thin white face peeping through the bars."

Caillet strode down and crossed the court-yard, gazing with a smile of scornful satisfaction upon the dead bodies of some of the soldiers as he passed, and muttering to himself, "These mighty lords! these mighty lords!" A few moments brought him to the tower the man had spoken of, and looking up he saw the countenance of old Thibalt still gazing through the grating. Two heavy bolts upon the door were soon drawn; but there still remained a lock, and Caillet was searching for some means of dashing it off, when the voice of old Thibalt exclaimed from above, "There is an axe in that man's hand in the middle of the court." Without reply, Caillet turned thither, and with some difficulty wrenched the battle-axe from the stern grasp in which the dead man held it. A single blow then dashed the lock to atoms; and as Caillet threw open the door, the form of old Thibalt was seen descending the stairs. The old villain said nothing, but grasped his liberator's hand, and then taking a step or two forward, gazed into the faces of two or three of the dead men with a quiet, inquisitive grin, in which contempt and triumph were strangely blended.

"A good beginning, Caillet," he said—"a good beginning: they have fleshed themselves well. What are they about now, and where are they? Let there be no sparing. Blood, blood's the thing!"

"No fear of that, no fear of that!" answered Caillet: "they have had blood enough; too much, indeed."

"That can't be, that can't be," cried the old man: "they must drink to the very dregs, Caillet, if you would have any-

thing like success. First, because blood is like wine to a drunken man—the more he takes the more he must have; next, because this blood can never be forgiven, so that each man that joins us must have his baptism in gore; next, because, as long as there is one drop of this noble blood left in France, there will be war between it and ours. Let them drink deep, Caillet; let them drink deep! Break down the bridge behind your people, and they must go forward. Where are they now?"

"Murdering the women and children," replied Caillet, "up in the keep there."

"That is right, that is right," cried Thibalt, rubbing his hands with a low laugh; "kill the mother serpent, and crush the eggs. Now, let you and I go and seek for the gold."

"Not you and I only," said Caillet, sternly. "We must call others to help and to witness. I come to free the people of France, not to seek wealth for myself."

The old man looked disappointed; and he replied with a sneering turn of the lip, "Do you think, Caillet, that these people will so deal with you? Will not they get all the gold that they can, and let you know nothing about it?"

"The first that does so shall die," rejoined Caillet; "and I will take means to ensure that it is not done undiscovered."

"You are wrong, you are wrong," said Thibalt, setting his teeth bitterly. "Wealth is always power, Caillet; every other sort is uncertain. You can always buy men, even when you cannot command them. Bethink you, Caillet; the time may come when some one will rise up to oppose you—some one as full of knowledge and strength as you are. If you have secured to yourself wealth in the mean while, you have still the advantage, and will triumph over him. But if you have not, he will triumph over you, for novelty will be in his favour. Come, let you and I go and seek for gold, else it will be too late."

But Caillet kept his purpose firmly, replying with a sharp sneer, "I seek it not, Thibalt, and I will take care that you seek it not either; for if you do, none will share it with you, and none will find any where you have passed."

Thibalt would fain have resisted; but he found, not without bitterness and disappointment, that the bold man with whom he was leagued had assumed that command which his powers of mind naturally bestowed upon him, and that Caillet was determined both to lead and to be obeyed. Perceiving that opposition for the time was in vain, the ancient knave followed his companion in search of some of the other insur-

gents. He indeed speculated upon thwarting him at some future period, and seizing upon a greater share of authority than Caillet seemed willing to assign him. But when they had joined a party of some twenty or thirty of the rebels who by this time had gathered together in the court, and he saw the enthusiasm with which the people regarded their leader, the power with which he swayed their passions, and the prompt obedience which every one was prepared to show, Thibalt perceived that he must not hope to be more than second, and made up his mind to secure to himself that station.

One by one the insurgents poured forth from various parts of the castle; and just as the evening was falling they assembled in the great court, round the pile of every sort of plunder which had been taken in the Castle of Plessy. To blood-thirsty vengeance now succeeded another appetite: rapine glared in the eager eyes and fierce countenances of the men around, as they gazed upon piles of wealth such as in the wildest dreams of imagination they never expected to call their own. For his part, Caillet left them to assign what share they would to their leader; and in the joy and triumph of the moment they were liberal, declaring that of all booty taken from the nobles one-eighth part should be allotted to him who had led them on to their first success.

"I receive it," said Caillet, "not for my own sake, but for yours, for we shall need money to meet many expenses that you dream not of. One-half of what you give me I set apart for the common use of the great cause, the other I divide between myself and good old Thibalt la Rue, who has sacrificed everything for us; so that his portion, whatever it be in the general distribution, shall be equal to my own."

All that Caillet said was, for the time being, law to those that surrounded him; for in fact he had at that moment everything in his favour to give him authority over the peasantry of France: high education, natural genius, skill in arms and in all sorts of exercises, great eloquence, keen foresight, dauntless courage, corporeal vigour, beauty and grace, inexhaustible activity, indomitable hardness of constitution. He felt all these advantages, too, and the very consciousness of his power served but to augment it. There was one feeling, indeed, in his bosom, which might have diminished his influence if indulged. It was not the wild, rash, passionate love which he felt towards Adela de Mauvinet; for that he knew might lead him on to efforts almost superhuman. It was not the burning thirst for revenge against those who had hitherto thwarted

him; for that would carry him forward even more fiercely in the path which it was necessary for him to pursue. It was, that something like remorse was still present in his heart; that the natural effect of the education he had received was to make him look upon deeds of mere butchery with some degree of horror.

About two hours after the partition of the booty had been made, Caillet and Thibault sat above, in one of the higher rooms of the keep, upon pretence of taking counsel in regard to what was next to be done, while their comrades revelled below, but in reality for the purpose of escaping for the time from a scene of brutal excess. Caillet had already taken steps for the defence of himself and his companions, should they be attacked during the night; and his measures displayed a deep insight into the characters of all around. He had chosen out some twenty men, whose nature, though fierce and resolute, was abhorrent to mere animal indulgence, and had appointed them to guard the castle while the rest wallowed in wine and gluttony. Each of those he selected had his passion, as Caillet well knew. With one it was blood, with another it was gold, with another it was authority; but with none of them was it the love of dainty food or intoxicating drink. Still some inducement was necessary to make them relish the solitary watch of the castle wall while their companions were making merry within; and Caillet, as he had no power to order, had picked them out from the rest, and had led them to the task he assigned them by the very means to which their several characters rendered them most susceptible. To one he had given money from his own store; to another he had held out the prospect of command; to a third he had spoken of the proposed massacre of the following day; and he had met with no opposition from any. All obeyed with a promptitude which paved the way for that sort of discipline, if it may be so called, which he intended soon to introduce.

The two chief insurgents then conferred together in the chamber which had once been the lady's bower in the Castle of Plessy. The dead bodies had been removed, and the gold and trinkets which had been found there had long before been carried away, as we have said, and distributed amongst the plunderers. Many another decoration, however, remained; and as Caillet sat by the table with his head leaning moodily upon his hand, he rolled his eyes over the hangings of silk and fine linen that covered the walls like the curtains of a tent, and thought of the soft and happy hours which might there have passed, the scenes of domestic love and joy that

were now at an end for ever. The dreams of his own youthful years, the hopes and aspirations of the purer part of his being, came like the long, sad train of early friends departed which will sometimes throng upon our slumber.

But, as occurs in sleep, such visions of the past were mingled with the sterner realities of the present. The image of the lady of that bower herself rose up before the wand of the enchanter Imagination; he saw her in her calm beauty as she might have moved through those halls that morning; he saw her with her clasped hands in that terrible hour when he first burst upon her sight; he saw her at his knees praying for that mercy which he had refused to grant; and at the same time, from the hall beneath, rose up in loud revelry the voices of the very men who had polluted and destroyed her.

For a moment Caillet became sick at heart, and again he pressed his hand upon that brow where the fiend Crime had stamped in characters of fire the sentence of eternal condemnation. His hell had begun upon earth, but he felt that he must be the demon outright. The burden of remorse, the weight of irrevocable sins, the impossibility of retreat, the wild, burning thirst for more which always follows wickedness, urged him to cast away every human feeling; and after firmly clenching his hands and setting his teeth, as if to smother in his bosom the last sighs of humanity, he rose slowly from the table, took up the lamp that stood before him, and deliberately applied the light in several places to the hangings of the room.

Old Thibault laughed aloud. In an instant all was in a blaze; and in less than half-an-hour, from the watch-towers of the country around was seen a tall flame, like a cathedral spire of fire, rising up from the devoted Castle of Plessy.

CHAPTER XXVII.

It was the same sweet calm evening in the early year, which, as we have related in the last chapter, was blackened by the first outbreak of the most bloody and ferocious insurrection that was ever recorded by the page of history, when a large body of horsemen, in number perhaps fifty, accompanied by twelve or fourteen women, arrived at a little village in the Beauvoisis, not above twelve miles from the fated Castle of Plessy.

We may well call it fated; for had that troop of veteran soldiers but united with the force in Beauvais and St. Leu, and turned its arms against the insurgents, the Jacquerie would have been nipped in the bud, and would never have brought forth the baleful fruit it did. But, alas! the leader of that body and those who were with him were utterly unaware of the events that were taking place so near. They had made inquiries during the morning, and had found that all the parties of adventurers which had lately scourged that part of the country had been called away by the prospect of greater gain into the neighbourhood of Paris, and that the whole of the Beauvoisis was now free from foreign plunderers. Thus with a feeling of perfect security they journeyed on gaily and happily; and on arriving at the little village which I have mentioned, paused to get some refreshment from the country people. Hostelry, indeed, there was none, but the gentleman at the head of the band seemed well known to the peasantry; and everything that could be found was speedily brought forth to set before the Lord of Mauvinet and his fair daughter Adela, as they sat upon the little green that ran between two rows of houses, one on either side.

"Thanks, my good woman! thanks!" said the Lord of Mauvinet as he rose from the grass; "your milk is better than in our more southern land of Touraine; and I hope and trust you have not suffered so severely here as our good people on the banks of the once merry Loire."

"We have been somewhat better off than our neighbours, noble sir," replied the woman who served them, taking with

lowly reverence some pieces of money that the Lord of Mauvinet gave her. "You see, the forest shelters us here, beau sire; but the folks out in the open country have been driven almost to despair. I know hundreds of them who have fed all the winter upon acorns."

"Poor souls!" cried the Lord of Mauvinet; "we must do somewhat to help them, and that right speedily. It is sad to hear of such misery; and the more patiently our peasantry bear it, the more terrible it is to witness."

"Ay, sir, they do bear it patiently," said the woman; "but there are some bad spirits amongst them too. That same William Caillet has been roaming about for the last three months, and ——"

"If I catch him," interrupted the Lord of Mauvinet, "he shall curse the day that he was born. Does he show himself openly, then? The Lord of St. Leu wrote me that he would cause him to be seized long ago."

"Ah! noble sir, but the good lord has not the power," replied the woman; and looking fearfully around, she added, in a low tone: "Why, I have just now heard that this very morning the bailiff of the Lord of St. Leu found him at Chappelle-en-Mont and tried to seize him, but that Caillet killed the bailiff, and an archer that was with him, too."

"I will to St. Leu this night!" exclaimed the Lord of Mauvinet. "Adela, you shall go on with the rest, and I with Huguenin and five of the men-at-arms will turn aside at the top of the hill, that I may confer with my noble friend, and ensure that this monster roams the country no more."

Adela, however, pleaded hard to accompany him. She would fain, she said, see her fair friend Margaret of St. Leu; and she loved not to ride at the head of a troop of men-at-arms without her father or her brother as a companion.

"We must not burden the good lord," answered the count, "with too many unexpected guests."

But Adela still entreated; and at length it was so arranged, that she with five of the men-at-arms should go with her father, sending on her women and the rest of the troop to the place where they had originally proposed to stop.

"There is no time for delay, then," said the Lord of Mauvinet; "for we are far from St. Leu, and it will be dark long ere we reach it. Let your travelling gear, Adela, be charged behind one of the men-at-arms. We must quicken the speed of our horses, for we have lost much time by the way."

No long preparations were requisite, and the troop was soon once more in motion. The road they took wound

through the forest and up one of the numerous hills which diversified the woodland, passing not very far from the spot where stood the hut which Caillet had tenanted for many weeks. The whole country was perfectly well known to the Lord of Mauvinet; and halting where the road to St. Leu branched off from that which led to Beaumont, he sent forward the greater part of the troop, while he, with Adela and the four or five men that he had chosen to accompany him, pursued the same path which the Captal de Buch had taken a month or two before. But instead of embarrassing himself in the intricacies of the forest, he followed a direct course towards St. Leu, skirting along the woods as they fringed the top of the hill. A wide scene was thence exposed to his eye; for although the patches of brushwood sometimes crossed the road and ran a considerable way down the slope, the declivity was in general so considerable as to enable a mounted cavalier to see over the whole country towards Beauvais and La Houssaye.

As they proceeded, however, the sun, which had been casting long shadows over the scene during the whole of the latter part of their ride, sank beneath the horizon altogether, and after a brief moment or two of twilight, night fell, and the stars came brightly out in the heaven above. Still the Lord of Mauvinet rode on without any apprehension, conversing with his daughter on the beauty of the night, and calculating when the moon would rise.

"I think she is coming up now, my father," said Adela, after they had gone on for about half-an-hour in darkness. "What a red light she gives at this time of the year when low in the sky!"

The count looked out towards the part of the horizon to which she pointed, and for a moment or two made no reply, watching a faint rosy streak that hung upon some low clouds on the edge of the sky.

"That cannot be the moon; Adela," he answered at length—"that is to the westward. It must be the light of some fire that the poor peasantry have kindled to warm themselves by. It is probably nearer to us than it seems; but it is increasing very rapidly. How the dull red glare flickers against the heavens! and see! there is smoke curling up in the midst of the blaze, like some dark demon in his fiery element. Where can that be, Huguenin?" he continued, drawing in his rein. "It must surely be at Plessy."

"It is farther than Plessy, I should think, my lord," replied the gentleman to whom he addressed himself.

But almost as he spoke, the blaze appeared well-nigh extinguished for a moment, and then rose up in a pyramid of light, rendering every object around almost as bright as day. The Lord of Mauvinet spurred on his horse to a spot a few yards in advance, for the purpose of obtaining a better sight; and thence the towers of Plessy were plainly to be distinguished, with the fire pouring through the windows of the keep, and the spire of flame topping the donjon-tower.

"By heaven!" exclaimed the count, "it is the castle itself! On my knighthood, I must ride down to see if I can aid them. What can I do with thee, my Adela? Take Huguenin and go on to St. Leu."

"Nay," said Adela, "there are some cottages not far on. Do you not remember the beautiful child that was bitten by the viper just as we were passing one day, and that I cured it with the oil my uncle brought from Palestine?"

"Yes, I remember well," replied the count, quickly; "but what of that, Adela? wilt thou stay there? The people are most likely gone to sleep by this time."

"Let us try," said Adela. "It is straight between Plessy and St. Leu, and you can take me with you as you return: you cannot be long, my father, for that castle is well-nigh down, I fear."

"I fear so too," answered the count; "but let us make haste, dear child. Once I have bestowed thee safely, I shall soon be down and back again."

They accordingly rode on, and approached a wild-looking hut which has been already described in this book. It was that of Jacques Morne. As they drew up their horses, a momentary apprehension, a sort of presentiment of evil, seemed to cross the mind of the count. "Keep Huguenin with thee, my child," he said: "ever since that villain Caillet's conduct, I fear for thee, Adela."

"Oh, there is no danger, my father," replied the lady: "these good people would give their life for me. Never shall I forget how the woman watched me as I poured the oil into the viper's bite, and how she blessed me when the child looked up and smiled again."

While they had been speaking, one of the men-at-arms had dismounted and knocked with his gauntlet at the door. A female voice almost immediately demanded, "Who is there? Is it thou, Jacques?"

"It is I, good mother," replied Adela, riding up to the door: "I want to rest with you a while."

The woman undid the bolt and came forth, gazing wildly

under her bent brows at the lady and the armed men. She gave Adela no welcome; and her looks and her apparel spoke so much misery that the fair girl believed want to be the cause of her coldness; and dismounting from her horse, without fear or hesitation, she said, "Do not you remember me, good mother? How is your sweet boy that was bitten by the viper?"

"He has been worse bitten by the viper hunger," replied the woman: "we have been starving, lady."

"Well, you shall starve no longer," rejoined Adela, while one of the men took her horse and fastened it to a tree.

"I know that," answered the woman, wildly: "those days have passed."

"Well, good woman, I will wait here a while," continued Adela, "till the count comes back. Ride on, my dear father—I shall be quite safe here."

"You had better stay and watch without, Huguenin," said the count.

But the wife of Jacques Morne now exclaimed eagerly, though with the same wild look, "She is safe, noble sir; she is quite safe—no one shall harm her here, if I were to die for it. Do you think any one should hurt in my cottage the lady that saved my child?"

"Nay, I doubt you not," replied the count, turning away without giving any further orders; and Huguenin, who to say the truth was eager to see what was going on below, rode after his lord, leaving Adela in the hut.

The Lord of Mauvinet put his horse into a quick pace, and galloped rapidly over the two miles that lay between the hut of the swineherd and the serfs' village of Plessy en Val. The fire still raged; and though now and then the trees cut off the view of the castle, and threw a dark shadow over the road, the light was still so strong, either direct from the burning building or reflected from the sky, that every object was quite distinct at some distance. At the entrance of the place, the Lord of Mauvinet drew up his horse in surprise and horror at the sight of one of the peasants lying dead at his own door, and springing to the ground he looked into the hut. It was partly burnt, but the fire seemed to have gone out of itself after merely consuming the rafters. On the floor lay a woman and three children weltering in their blood, and the count drew back troubled and bewildered.

"What can be the meaning of this?" he said. "Some band of adventurers must have sacked the place and taken the castle. This is no accidental fire, Huguenin."

"I fear that it is not, beau sire," replied Huguenin; "but, look! there's a head peeping at us from behind that second cottage. It is a woman; she takes us for some of the companions."

"Come hither, my poor girl," said the count, speaking aloud—"we will not hurt, but rather defend thee."

His voice caught the woman's ear; and after twice looking cautiously out from behind the building, she ventured to come forth altogether; at first approaching slowly, but then running on and clasping the count's knees,

"Fly, my lord! fly!" she cried—"fly, or they will murder you too!"

"Who?" demanded the Lord of Mauvinet, raising the young woman from the ground. "Who has done all that bloody work?"

"Fly, fly!" reiterated the poor creature, wildly: "get into the forest and hide you among the trees: I have left my baby amongst the bushes, and come to see if my husband be living or dead."

"But who," demanded the count again, "who are they that have outdone all the wickedness of others, and have butchered the poor peasantry in their huts?"

"It is William Caillet and his people," answered the woman: "there are thousands and tens of thousands. They have taken Plessy and murdered my good lord, and now they have set fire to the castle and will soon be coming back again. So, fly if you would save your lives!"

The Lord of Mauvinet pressed his hand upon his brow, cursing the day that he had ever raised from the low state in which he had first found him, the villain who had so ill requited all his kindness. "Thousands and tens of thousands!" he cried. "Taken the Castle of Plessy, a strongly-defended fortress! But my child, Huguenin! my child! We must indeed fly and take her from this place, and that right quickly."

As he spoke, he remounted his horse and was turning his bridle to go back by the road he came, but the woman caught the rein, exclaiming, "Not that way, not that way! Look! look! They are going over the hill;" and directing his eyes towards the fields, the Lord of Mauvinet perceived, at the distance of half-a-mile, a large troop of men, some four or five hundred in number, already between him and the cottage of the swineherd Mornic. They were holding no array, though keeping close together; but from the bright reflection of the fire from various weapons of steel that they carried on their shoulders, it was evident that they were well armed. At the

same time a sound of loud shouting and singing came from the road to Plessy, and the woman exclaimed, "Hark! hark! they are upon that road too. They will kill us if they find us here."

"I must up the hill at all risks!" cried the Lord of Mauvinet. "Let go my rein, girl! My daughter is at the swine-herd's hut above."

"What, Morne's?" she asked; "Jacques Morne! why, he is one of the chief butchers! Your daughter is dead by this time; for they have vowed not to leave one drop of noble blood unspilled throughout the land. If you will go, come hither with me. I will guide you to the back of the hut by a shorter way."

"Take her up behind thee, François," cried the count, "and ride on as she directs."

"Speed! speed!" cried the woman, as soon as the man had raised her on his horse. "They are coming quick—I hear them, and they will kill us all as they did Martin the wheel-right. Through between those cottages there!—amongst the willows by the stream! Now up," she continued as they rode along, "across that break in the wood, and then the narrow road to the left. It is steep and slippery."

Onward, however, they galloped without a moment's pause, till they had reached the top of the hill.

"Now which way?" demanded the Lord of Mauvinet.

"Hush! speak low," said the woman, "for you are near. Let me down—my babe lies under those trees. Follow the path straight on—it will lead you to the styes behind the hut. Perchance you may get there before them and save your daughter; but if you find them there, you may die with her, but not deliver her."

The count spurred forward quickly, though more cautiously, the trees for some way shutting out all view beyond. A moment or two after, however, the light of the still-burning fire came through the branches, and the next instant he could distinguish the mass of low buildings in which the swine were kept. But, alas! there came upon his ear the sound of loud voices talking and laughing; and as he looked between the trees, he saw the multitude, some sitting, some standing, at a halt before the cottage where he had left his child.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MANY are the lessons that the guileless heart of youth requires ere it learns the hard and terrible task of suspicion; and though assuredly Adela had seen enough of baseness and ingratitude, in one who had been loaded with benefits, to make her doubt that any tie can bind the corrupt spirit of man, yet she entered the cottage of the swineherd without the slightest fear, and approached a large fire near which was placed the bed of the peasant's children. They were buried in profound sleep, on their lowly couch of dried rushes and withered leaves; and Adela stooped down, with a feeling of natural satisfaction, to look at the little being she had saved from almost certain death.

When she raised her head again, two things struck her with some surprise, and created the first apprehension that had entered her mind. The woman was still standing at the door, gazing upon her with an expression difficult to describe. It could scarcely be called fierce, and yet there was a wild, glaring savageness in her eyes that startled and alarmed her young guest. There was a sort of hesitation, a doubt, even perhaps a shade of fear in it, that naturally excited terror; but at the same time there was a second object even more calculated to create suspicion than the face of the woman herself. On a rough wooden block in the midst of the room, which served for the purpose of a table, appeared a multitude of things that entirely contradicted the tale of starvation which she had told. There were rich meats and leathern bottles apparently filled with wine. There was a large golden drinking cup, too, and another smaller one of silver, with a number of spoons of precious metal, a rich hunting-horn, and a bracelet from a lady's arm. Where could all these come from? The question flashed through Adela's mind in a moment, and a fit of involuntary trembling seized her at the thought.

"You tremble, lady," said the woman, approaching her—"it cannot be with cold."

"I know not why," replied Adela, hesitating; "but my father will soon be back again, and ——"

"Perhaps he may never come back again," rejoined the woman sternly. "How many men has he with him?"

"Only five," replied Adela.

"And none behind?" asked the swineherd's wife.

"The rest have gone on towards Beaumont," answered Adela. "O God! why did not I go with him?"

"To die?" demanded the woman.

"Ay, if need be," said the lady more firmly; "but why should he die? Tell me more! The adventurers have not left the country then--this is their plunder--and they leave it with you, unhappy woman! Have you promised me protection but to destroy me?"

"No," answered the swineherd's wife, coming close to her, and speaking in a solemn tone; "no, lady, I have not. You have been looking at that child," she continued: "you saved his life, and by that child I swear that I will save yours, or they shall take mine."

"But my father!" cried Adela, dropping her riding glove and clasping her hands—"oh! save him too!"

"That I cannot do," she replied: "I am sorry that I let him go on, because I have heard that he is a good man; but if he reach Plessy he dies."

"Then let me ride after him, and tell him not," exclaimed Adela, darting towards the door. But the woman stopped her, saying, "It is all in vain; they are half-way there by this time; but perhaps they may meet a warning by the way. They must pass through the village; and if they use their senses, they will find enough to make them draw the bridle there."

Adela covered her eyes with her hands and wept, and the woman stood gazing at her for a minute or two in silence; but at length she added, "Thou art a pretty creature and a good, and perhaps it were as well for you to die now as hereafter; but yet I will save you, even if these men come back."

"They may pass by without dismounting," cried Adela; "and surely, even if they take my father and myself, they will not put us to ransom as they did before. But shut the door, good mother; close it well, deaden the fire, and let them think we all sleep: they may pass by without dismounting."

The woman shook her head. "You mistake, you mistake," she said. "These are not people who either give or take ransoms. It is the peasantry of France, lady, who have risen to slay their oppressors, and to drown out in the blood of our tyrants the very memory of the chains we have broken."

The work has begun already. Plessy is taken, its lord and all his minions are dead; and the gold, and the wealth, and the rich food, and the fine wine, which they had hoarded up while we were starving in misery and wretchedness, are now divided amongst those who had a better right to them than men who kept them: that is the share of my husband and one or two others, to whom it fell by lot."

Adela kept her hand pressed tightly over her eyes. She durst not say what she felt; for there was a fierceness in the woman's manner which made her fear that any unguarded word might be made a pretext to betray her to the destroyers, and she only murmured, therefore, "Then your husband is one of them?"

"Ay is he, lady," answered the woman: "he is at length a man—a human being. He is no longer the beast of the field for any lord! But, hark! was not that a sound?"

"Oh, save me, save me!" cried Adela, her natural repugnance to death overcoming every other feeling for the moment.

"Fear not, fear not!" replied Jacques Morne's wife: "I will save thee!" and lowering her tone a little, she added with a softened manner, "Did you not save my boy? But you must do exactly what I tell you," she continued. "It may be difficult; my husband is a changed man; and when he came back an hour ago to leave those things here, he was over the knees in blood. Mercy and fear have no place in his heart now; and I must conceal you from him if he should come, though I do not believe he will, for they are going on with all speed to burn the Castle of St. Leu or some other place, and they will not be satisfied so long as there is a stronghold left in the Beauvoisis. First, I must lead away your horse, for if they see him they will suspect the truth; and then I will soon find some place where you may be hidden."

"Where? where?" cried Adela.

"Wait till I come back and I will show you," answered the woman, and she turned and left the cottage for a moment or two.

Adela looked wildly around her; there seemed no place where even a child could conceal itself, and in despair she thought of going out into the forest and seeking some obscure spot amongst the trees; but ere she could reach the door, the swineherd's wife returned, and leading her back, said, "Be not afraid, you shall be here in safety. I hear them coming over the fields and through the woods," she continued, "sing-

ing and rejoicing in the great deeds they have done. We shall have bread now—no more lack of food—no more want and starvation: furred gowns for the children, and milk, and wine, and bread."

While she thus went on, the predominant idea taking up her whole attention and making her forget the terrors of her guest, Adela stood before her ready to drop, clasping her hands in the wildness of fear, and murmuring incoherent prayers and entreaties, mingled with low words expressive of her apprehensions for her father, which not even the dread of immediate death could banish.

At length the woman noticed her again, exclaiming, "Fear not, poor trembler! fear not, but come hither with me;" and walking slowly and deliberately to the other side of the room, she opened a rude door, which Adela had imagined afforded another outlet into the forest. As soon as it was thrown open, however, she perceived that it led merely to a low narrow receptacle for fuel, in which were piled up nearly to the top a number of fagots, composed of dry branches gathered in the wood during the winter season.

"There is room for thee behind," cried the woman eagerly, as if startled by some sound; "get thee in, round there: lie still, and stir not, whatever thou hearest. Hark! they are coming!"

"Oh, ask for my father!" cried Adela, as with difficulty she made her way into the recess round the pile of fagots.

"Hush!" said the swineherd's wife; "crouch down behind there. I will leave the door open that they may suspect nothing. Stay—I will put a fresh fagot on the fire; then they will seek none themselves;" and thus saying, she took up one of the bundles of wood and cast it upon the hearth.

In the mean while, Adela, shaking in every limb with terror, lay down behind the pile, listening, with her sense of hearing quickened by fear, to the steps and tones of the men who were approaching. The sounds grew louder every moment as the insurgents came nearer, some singing with drunken ribaldry, some laughing, while the hurried and irregular tread of their feet seemed to the poor girl like the rush of a flood of waters destined to overwhelm her.

In a minute, some one stopped at the door of the hut and shook it violently, while the voice of Jacques Morne exclaimed, "Open, wife! open; it is I. Why, in the fiend's name," he continued, as he entered, "do you bolt the door? Are we not lords and masters now? Come in, Caillet; come in, old Thibault."

"Lords and masters, wot ye?" said the woman. "Not quite that yet, Jacques. You have much to do before you will be that. Know you there have been men-at-arms here since you went?"

"Why did you not kill them, then?" demanded Jacques Morne. "It is no more killing a man-at-arms than it is a weasel."

"You are drunk," said his wife. "Did you not meet them, Caillet?"

"No," answered Caillet: "which way did they take? and how many were there?"

"Some nine or ten," replied the woman; "but as for the way they took, I cannot tell. It seemed as if they went towards Plessy."

"Did you let them know what had happened?" demanded Caillet.

"No, no," exclaimed the swineherd's wife; "I took care not to do that. I thought that they might perhaps fall in with you and get the fate of the others."

"If they have gone down to Plessy," said Caillet, "they will find plenty ready to deal with them. Know you who they were? If there be any great man amongst them, it may be as well to go back again to do him honour."

Adela's heart sank, while the woman paused a moment ere she replied; and small as was the chance of her father's escape, it was a relief to her to hear the words, "I marked not their faces, but they seemed common men-at-arms."

A voice then shouted from without, "Holloa! where do we go to? Where do we go to? Don't keep us here waiting. Some say St. Leu, others say Argot."

"I come, I come!" cried Caillet. "Take the way to Argot," he continued, speaking from the door: "the serfs of the village there will join us, and we can sleep in the huts round about the castle; so that to-morrow by daybreak we have them in a net. To Argot! to Argot! Go on; I will follow you. Give me a cup of wine, Jacques Morne," he added; "I have a burning thirst upon me."

"Thou hast drunk blood enough, Caillet," answered Morne in a drunken tone; "but it quenches no drought, I know; and the more one tastes the more one longs for. I should like to kill a dozen more to-night."

As he spoke, he moved towards the table where the bottle stood, while Caillet remained with his eyes bent firmly upon the blazing fagots, as if he found a great interest in watching the progress of the devouring element. Adela continued, as

before, behind the pile of brushwood, holding her breath as Jacques Morne came nearer to her, lest even the slightest sound should call his attention. What were her feelings, however, when he suddenly stopped as he was advancing towards the table, and stooped down exclaiming, "Here is a woman's glove! Who brought it here?"

"Yourself, you fool!" replied his wife readily. "You are so drunk you do not know what you are doing. You brought it with the other things, and one of the children had it to play with."

"It is a lie!" said Jacques Morne. "I brought no glove."

"Hush, hush!" cried Caillet; "give me the wine, Jacques Morne, and squabble not for foolery. Will you come with us, or will you not?"

"I will stay here and sleep," replied the swineherd, "and come to you in the morning."

"That you shall not!" exclaimed his wife: "I will have none of you here till you have done more of the good work; or else I will give you a petticoat and make you mind the children, while I take an axe on my shoulder and follow the deliverers of the land. It is such men as you are that spoil all things by fancying them done when they are scarcely begun."

"You are right, you are right!" cried Caillet: "though we have seized one castle, destroyed the nest of one vulture, yet there is many another foul brood to be exterminated before we can be at all secure. Those who stop short in such matters as these are almost as bad as enemies, for they cool the hearts of others. Come, come, Morne; you have been amongst the first, and must not halt now."

"I will not halt, I will not halt, Caillet!" cried Jacques Morne, who had filled himself a cup of wine, while he gave another to Caillet, and had thereby added to the inebriety which was already upon him. "Here, old Thibault—drink, man, drink! I will not halt, Caillet; I will not halt if all the fiends of hell wanted to keep me. But this glove; I want to know about this accursed glove! No—halt? I'll not halt. I'll only sit down for a minute to rest myself, and come on directly;" and as he spoke, he proceeded with somewhat unsteady steps, as if to seek a seat upon the very pile of fagots behind which poor Adela de Mauvinet lay concealed.

Before he reached it, however, he stumbled, and fell prone upon the bed of leaves and rushes where the children lay, waking them in terror and surprise. His wife scolded vehemently, and would have pushed him out; but Caillet, turning

away with a look of contempt, told her to keep him where he was.

"He is in no state to go with us," he added; "let him come on to-morrow. But, my faith, we must have less drunkenness."

Thus saying, he strode to the door and left the cottage together with old Thibault, who had taken up the golden cup into which the swineherd poured the wine, and forgot to put it down ere he departed.

"What is to be done now?" murmured Jacques Morne's wife to herself, looking from her husband to her children. "Hush, hush, Hue! lie down, my boy, and go to sleep again. Drunken beast! why, you have wakened the children!"

"You lie!" cried Morne; "I did not waken them—you awoke them yourself;" and sitting up on the end of the bed he prepared to rise, though it was evidently with difficulty.

"Ha!" said the woman, a new thought seeming to strike her, "thou shalt have no more wine, though thou wouldst drink the whole bottle if thy pitiful stomach would hold it; but thou shalt have no more, I say;" and as she spoke she moved to the table, affecting to take the means of further potations out of his reach.

"I will, I will!" cried Jacques Morne, rushing forward with the obstinacy of drunkenness; "I will drink the whole *boiteau*, I declare, as I saw the juggler do at the Cour Pleniére."

"That thou couldst not if thou wouldst, and shouldst not if thou couldst," replied his wife, affecting to struggle with him for the large leathern bottle. She easily enough suffered him to take it, and setting the mouth to his lips, he drank a long deep draught. Then staggering back to the corner of the bed, he sat for a little while poisoning the bottle on his knee, and at length raised it once more to his head. He could not hold it up long, however, but let it drop from his hands, spilling part of the contents upon the floor; and after swaying backwards and forwards for a moment or two, with his eyes half closed, he fell backwards upon the bed, dead asleep.

The woman hushed the children to sleep again, and then looked out at the door; but she suddenly drew back her head, and waited for a moment listening. Then approaching to the spot where Adela lay, she took her by the hand and brought her forth, saying, "All is safe now, I think. Drink some of this wine to give you strength. Mount your horse again, and away either to Beaumont or St. Leu with all speed."

"But my father? my father?" exclaimed Adela.

"He is safe," said a voice apparently close to her, which

she instantly recognised as that of the count; and turning round, she gazed over the part of the cottage from which it seemed to proceed, but could see nothing except a small square hole, apparently made to look from the hut itself towards the styes for the swine.

The swineherd's wife grasped the fair girl's arm tightly, and pointed to Jacques Morné as he lay prostrate on the bed, saying, "My husband shall be safe! Is it not so? I have delivered your life, remember, and I will —"

Ere she could add more, however, the Lord of Mauvinet was in the cottage, and in another instant had clasped Adela to his heart. The woman plucked him by the sleeve, murmuring some anxious questions; but the count turned towards her with a sad and frowning brow, replying, "You have spared and shall be spared; but add not a word: the curse of God is upon such deeds as have been done this day; and, though I take not yon wretch's life, vengeance is not the less sure. Come, my child, come! I have seen all and heard all, and for your sake the sword, which perhaps ought to be drawn, rests in the scabbard."

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE glorious summer had come back again, calling out of the earth the flowers and leaves, spreading over the sky the sunshine and the blue, and giving back to the choristers of nature cheerfulness and song; as we may suppose the dawning of another life will do to the heart which has been chilled in the wintry grave, restoring to it the bright objects of love and affection lost upon earth, giving the sunshine of faith and the blue sky of peace, and drawing from the spirit the melodious voice of praise.

It was in the early morning, somewhere towards the hour of six; and the slanting sun, like hope in youth, brightened all the salient objects in the picture, and promised a long course of glory and of brightness. The heart of him who looked upon the glittering scene around beat in glad response to its aspect, as, keeping his horse at a quick pace during the freshness of the morning, a young cavalier, mounted upon a strong destrier, or charger, trotted gaily along through theilly cotintry which at that time formed the frontier of France on the side of Lower Lorraine. Like every one else in those

days, he rode fully armed, though the steel panoply by which he was covered was in a great measure concealed by a surcoat of arms, presenting a silver ground traversed by a broad stripe called a bend dexter, in deep blue, bearing on the centre of the breast, technically the fess-point, a heart embroidered in red. The cavalier was stout and tall, a light mustachio fringed his upper lip, and the hair, which was suffered to appear by a velvet cap replacing the helmet that hung at his saddle-bow, curled in profuse masses over his neck and shoulder. His complexion was browned by exercise and exposure; and upon his cheek and brow appeared more than one deep scar, telling of blows boldly met, and probably as vigorously returned. As he gazed around him, there was an air of glad hilarity in his face and in all his bearing, which spoke a heart full of hope and joy. One perceived it in the light touch of his left hand upon the bridle; one marked it in the half-suspended position of the right; one saw it in the bright sparkling of his clear hazel eye, in the thrown-back head, the expanded chest, and the smiling curl of the lip, as the varied thoughts chased each other through his busy mind.

That young cavalier was Albert Denyn, returning to his native land after his first campaign under the glorious leading of the Captal de Buch; and to say sooth, though there were manifold feelings in his bosom, which combined to give that joyful air to his whole person, the surcoat of arms which we have said he wore was not amongst the least important causes of the gladness which sparkled on his countenance.

He had gone forth with no right to any other garment than that of the serf; he came back clad in the coat of arms which he had won from a grateful prince by his own merits; and the feelings which had given him energy to win that garb were now his chief recompense in wearing it.

In every faculty of the mind and body, Albert Denyn had expanded, if we may use the term, since last we saw him; and all those faculties had been directed to win high renown, by an eager and enthusiastic spirit, prompted to vast exertions by the strong love which we have already seen working at his heart.

I believe that the portion of earthly greatness which men acquire is regulated as much by the strength of the passions which prompt them as by the powers of their minds. The passions, in short, are the mainsprings which move the watches of the world; the principles are the pendulums or balances which regulate the movements; the talents are the wheels which carry on the action. But, alas! the human

kind little appreciates a correct result, and the strength of the mainspring too often obtains more admiration in the world than the nice adaptation of those principles which regulate its movement. It is sad, it is very sad, to think that the meed of fame, of power, and of success, is more frequently assigned to the action of strong passions than to the operation of great intellect. The ambition that carried forward Napoleon Bonaparte raised him above Laplace in the estimation of the world, because Laplace was without any strong passion to direct his efforts on those roads where power and fortune are to be gained; but who can doubt, that traces calmly the course of the one and the other, where the greater mind, the greater soul, resided?

The man whose passions are so strong as to trample upon all restraint, to cast behind him virtue and remorse, and to use his talents solely for the gratification of his predominant desire, whatever that desire may be, has a field open before him from which the man of stronger principles is precluded; and though his success will often depend as much upon accident as upon his own efforts, yet he will acquire, either in fortune or misfortune, the renown of great enterprises, which is the most dazzling of all tinsel in the eyes of the world.

It must be acknowledged, that although Albert Denyn was possessed of great natural energies of mind and activity of body; although he was brave to a fault, quick, skilful, talented; though he had genius for everything which in that age led to greatness; nevertheless he owed his prompt and rapid success to the eager impetuosity, and the resolute and unconquerable perseverance which was given by the presence of a strong master-passion in his heart. Love with him was as one of those generals whom we have heard of, who have still conquered by their own energy, when every one around deemed success impossible; who, when repelled at one point, still attacked at another; and whose fire gave courage and energy to every part of the army that surrounded them.

Thus, during the time that he had followed the capital in his expedition against the pagans of Prussia, and in various other accidental enterprises which presented themselves, and were never neglected by that great adventurous leader, the thought of Adela de Mauvinet, the hope of justifying her regard, of winning renown which might reach her ears, and of gratifying her heart by his own success, seemed to give him eyes for opportunities that other people overlooked, and to endow him with resolution, endurance, courage, and activity,

which he might never have displayed in the same degree had not that strong motive been ever present to his thoughts.

We will not pause upon all that took place during the period of his absence. That period was but brief, it is true; but those were days in which great events and strange adventures crowded themselves into a narrow space, and jostled each other, if we may so term it, upon the highways of life. We have instances of men sharing in the great victory of Cressy in the north of France, and aiding to conquer the Saracens in the south of Spain, within six weeks; and the Captal de Buch was not one to let his sword slumber in the scabbard, whenever there was an occasion of drawing it with honour. As he went towards the north, he aided several of the princes of Germany in the wars which were then raging; and as he returned, he took service for twenty days with the emperor, and in that short space went through all the hazards, the adventures, and the struggles of a campaign.

Throughout the whole of these proceedings, Albert Denyn had every day some opportunities of distinguishing himself; and indeed it became visible to his own eyes, as well as to those of others, that such opportunities were studiously afforded him by the captal. This was the only sign of peculiar favour that the great leader bestowed upon him. At first it made the rest of the band somewhat jealous; but they found that to counterbalance, as it were, the advantage given, the captal was more sparing of reward and praise to Albert than to any other of his followers. He knew that an opening was what the youth desired, and that the honour was the best recompense for his exertions. Thus gradually the stout men-at-arms became reconciled to see Albert Denyn always chosen as one in any important undertaking; and even more, his success was so continual, his exertions were so great, his talents were so conspicuous, and his superiority was so evident, even to themselves, that they began to acknowledge his right to lead and to be obeyed, and often wondered amongst themselves why it was that the captal seemed so niggardly of praise and reward to one who so well deserved them both.

Whatever might be the object of the captal in the conduct which he pursued, Albert Denyn himself was well satisfied. There were occasional little traits which showed him that he was both esteemed and loved. More than once, when there was a difficulty in procuring quarters, his leader made him sleep in the same chamber with himself. On various expeditions he invited him to sit down to meat with him, and sent

him the cup out of which he drank. At other times, too, when they were alone together, Albert would see the captal's eyes rest upon him with an expression of thoughtful interest, which was not to be mistaken; and all these signs showed him, that neither the silence which his leader maintained regarding his successes, nor the severity with which he put him upon every service of danger, difficulty, or fatigue, was any indication of want of regard and care. He felt, moreover, that by this very conduct the captal was effecting for him the greatest of all objects—rendering him a hardy and experienced soldier in the shortest possible time.

If the captal was niggardly of praise, there were others who were not so; and several of the princes whom the wandering band of soldiers aided for the time distinguished the youth greatly both by applause and rewards. He bore away from one a rich casque; from another a splendid sword; another gave him a jewel of much value; another bestowed upon him a golden chain; and at length the emperor himself called him forth, while the captal was sitting at meat with him, and asked what he could do to reward his gallant efforts in defence of the empire.

"He is as brave a youth, Sir Emperor," the captal replied, "as ever drew a sword: and there is nothing that you can do for him of which he will not show himself as worthy as any knight in all the land."

The emperor gazed upon him for a moment from head to foot, and then said, "Take the cup, young man, and give me to drink."

Albert approached the high officer who held the golden hanap on the monarch's right hand; but the German noble hesitated for a moment to give him the cup, till the emperor signified his pleasure again by an inclination of the head. He then suffered Albert to take the hanap, while he himself filled it with wine; and bending his knee, the youth offered it to the German sovereign, who took it with a smile, saying, "Do you know what this means, good youth? It means that, noble or not noble heretofore, you are so from this moment. Go to our heralds, and bid them give you a coat of arms, and take this cup with which you have served me for your fee."

Had the monarch bestowed on him half his treasury, the gift would not have been so great to Albert Denyn; and gladly he accompanied the captal on his way back towards France, bearing with him feelings changed indeed, hopes raised, prospects widened, expectations excited, but having

still the same principles warm at his heart, the same passion strong in his bosom.

I have said his hopes were raised. Do not let my meaning be mistaken: the hopes that were entertained by Albert Denyn were of a kind difficult now-a-days to be conceived, and belonged entirely to the age he lived in and its chivalrous spirit. Far, far different were they from the warm and glittering hopes which, like the beams of the summer sun, pervade the universe of the human heart, cheering, brightening, vivifying all things. In comparison with these they were pale and cold, like the reflected light of the moon, shining brightly, it is true, upon some objects, but throwing long, dark shadows, too, upon those spots where the rays could not penetrate.

His hopes never reached to, never even approached, the very thought of winning her he loved for his own. What though he might now call himself noble? what though he might now be entitled to move in the same society as herself? He was yet well aware that there was no earthly chance of him, who had been but yesterday a serf, ever being considered worthy of one descended from a long line of glorious ancestry. The vision would have been a vain one, and knowing that it must be so, he limited his highest expectations and his most enthusiastic hopes to the joy of showing her whom he loved, and by whose heart, he too well knew, he was loved in return, that he was worthy of that higher happiness of which he dared not even dream. Such hopes, indeed, he did entertain, and they were sufficient to make his return joyful.

There was something, too, in re-entering his native land—in crossing the frontier from a foreign state—in pronouncing the word “France”—and in feeling himself surrounded by all the bright associations which are gathered together for almost every man within the circle of his country—that added to his happiness; so that perhaps that moment in which we have depicted him returning from the far north of Germany to the land of his birth, was the brightest that he had known since first he had learned what it was to love.

Albert Denyn was glad that he was alone; for he could indulge his thoughts and his feelings without any eye to mark the changes which they might produce in his demeanour. He had sought, indeed, for the opportunity of preceding the capital by a few days in their return to France; and, though his leader remonstrated upon the risk of passing alone through a country which had been, when they left it, very nearly in a state of anarchy, Albert Denyn had pressed his request, and had been accordingly charged by the capital with letters and

messages to the King of Navarre, one of the most extraordinary, though unfortunately not one of the most virtuous, personages of his day.

The young man-at-arms now rode on confident in success, and we may say, also, conscious of strong powers of body and of mind; and certainly, as he looked round him and saw a well-cultivated country and a contented peasantry, his eye lighted upon nothing to create apprehension or diminish his joy at re-entering his native land.

Situated upon the extreme frontier of France, and under the rule of great barons who had mingled but little in the desolating contest between France and England, the district which he was traversing had suffered comparatively little from the scourge of war. The desolating bands which had visited the other parts of France had not ventured thither; and the poor man sitting before his door, or the merry host of the little inn hanging up the garland upon the tall pole that gave notice of his vocation, spoke of peace and security, which went calmly and pleasantly to the heart of the wayfarer.

It was about six o'clock in the evening when Albert Denyn reached the small village of Orny, just upon the frontier of Champagne and Burgundy; and as his horse was tired by a long day's journey, he was anxious to find some place of rest for the night. Inns were naturally more scarce in those days than they are at present, and were rarely to be found except in great towns, or situated at certain distances from each other upon the most frequented high-roads. There were, indeed, in almost every considerable village, smaller places of accommodation, where the foot-passenger, or the peasant who drove his cattle to some neighbouring fair or market, could obtain repose and food; but these *auberges* were seldom frequented by the traveller on horseback, and indeed at one time were prohibited from receiving him. The adventurous man-at-arms, however, the knight, or the leader of a troop, was very rarely unable to find lodging and refreshment. Hospitality was a chivalrous duty, and perhaps one of the most generally practised. Occasionally, indeed, the great lord, the baron of the neighbouring castle, the châtelain in his manoir, set at nought all the principles of knighthood, and exercised his hospitality in a very unpleasant manner; but there was no medium, and the traveller who had any claim, however small, to distinction, was sure either to be received and entertained with joy and liberality, or plundered, and perhaps murdered, raised a bargain.

Albert Denyn, however, had no inclination to try the welcome of the castle, if he could find food and rest anywhere else; and he gazed inquiringly round the little village green, on the one side of which stood the church, and on the other a small but neat-looking house, with a little piece of vineyard attached to it, which he judged might be either that of some peasant well to do or that of the curate of the parish. He was soon led to conclude that the latter was the case, by perceiving an elderly man in the habit of a priest crossing over from the church with a slow step and eyes bent down upon the ground, and approaching the door of the house after having passed through the little vineyard.

Albert Denyn had not been taught to philosophise, or to enter deeply into the metaphysics of the human character; but to some men it is natural to take keen and rapid note of the various peculiarities in the appearance and demeanour of others, and to apply them as keys to read the inmost secrets of the heart. It is done almost unconsciously: we arrive at a judgment, scarcely knowing how at the time; and it requires thought, and the tracing back of our course step by step, before we can tell how we came to the conclusion which we have reached.

Such was the case with Albert Denyn: it was a part of his nature to mark instantly each trait in the bearing of others; and the habit had been still more strongly grafted in his mind during his service with the capital, whose keen and observant character had its influence on all who were long near him. Thus, as Albert's eye rested on the priest while crossing the small piece of vineyard, and remarked that the good old man turned neither to the right nor left, neither paused to examine whether the flower of his vineyard was going on prosperously, nor halted to look at some particular plant upon his path—for each man has his favourite, even in the vineyard—but walked silently on, with his eyes fixed heavily on the ground; as he marked all this, the young man said to himself, "The good father has something heavy at his heart, not to notice the things in which he usually takes pleasure. I must disturb him, however, to know where I can rest to-night;" and riding up to the vineyard just as the priest was opening the door of his cottage, he said, "Your blessing, my father!"

"You have it, my son," replied the priest, raising his eyes for the first time. "What would you further?"

"I would merely know," replied Albert Denyn, "if there be any place near where I can lodge for the night."

The priest gazed inquiringly in his face for a minute or two, and then, as if satisfied with what he had seen, replied, "Yes, my son, for the night you can lodge here: there is no other place within four leagues of this village, and you seem tired; but, alas! I can only give you lodging for one night, for I myself must hurry afar to other scenes, whence perhaps I may never return."

"Rest for the next six hours," answered Albert Denyn, "is all that I require, good father. On the morrow I too must wend forward on my way; and, indeed, were it not that my beast is weary, I would willingly go some leagues farther to-night."

"It is a noble beast," said the priest, looking at the horse, "and seems to bear you well. You will find a stable at the back of the house: there is room for him beside my mule. I will go in and bid the maid prepare you some supper."

Albert Denyn took round his horse to the stable which the priest had mentioned, and, as every good man would do, cared fully for the accommodation of his dumb companion before he thought of his own. He then returned and lifted the latch of the cottage door, which at once gave him admission, for no bolts and bars were there to keep out a marauder from the humble abode of the village curate. The room in which Albert found the good priest was a neat but simple chamber, with one or two wooden stools, a small table in the midst, and one at the side, which supported three books—a missal, a volume of homilies, and a Bible in the ordinary Latin translation of the Roman Church. Above the whole rose an oaken crucifix, with the figure of the expiring Saviour, not indifferently sculptured in the same wood. Upon it the eyes of the priest were fixed when Albert entered the room, bearing in them a peculiar expression, which the young soldier afterwards recollected, and easily interpreted when once he had got the key to his companion's feelings. That expression, though it had much humble piety in it, had also much questioning meditation; it seemed to ask of the Saviour, "Thou didst die to give peace to mankind, thou who art God as well as man; how is it that, notwithstanding thy ineffable love and mighty power, the same fearful passions, the same acts of blood and crime, disgrace that race for which thou hast made so awful a sacrifice?"

The supper was soon served after Albert entered the room: and the good man blessed the meal, but ate little himself, while the sadness which appeared in his whole countenance and manner gradually communicated itself to his younger

companion, and quenched the temporary gaiety with which he had returned to his native land. Albert longed to question his new acquaintance as to the cause of his care or sorrow, but he did not dare to do so openly; for reverence towards age and respect for the sacred character of the priesthood had been early implanted in his mind; and in those days it was neither a mode nor a custom to hold lightly every venerable institution. He approached the subject, however, saying, "Which way do you travel, good father, to-morrow? for I am journeying on into France, and perhaps may afford you some protection by the way."

"I am going towards Paris, my son," replied the priest; "but I fear that a single arm would be but of very little avail against those who might be disposed to molest me."

"In some cases certainly but little," rejoined Albert Denyn; "but there are other circumstances in which it might not prove so inefficient, good father. If it be the adventurers that you fear, when I left France they were as often to be found in bands of three or four as in parties of fifty or sixty."

"And do you think you could protect me against any three or four?" said the priest with a slight smile.

"I would do my best, at least," answered Albert Denyn, the colour mounting in his cheek. "I would do my best, good father, and I have seen some service."

"Your countenance speaks it, my son," replied the priest, looking at the scars which we have mentioned on the young man's cheek and brow; "and willingly will I accept your company and protection if you go towards Paris. But you are very young to have seen much service. In what wars have you borne arms? You could not have been at Poitiers."

"Not till the battle was over," said Albert Denyn; "but I went to the field shortly after to seek for my lord, who was supposed to be dead. Since then," he continued, "I have served with the noble Capital de Buch."

"What! then," exclaimed the priest with a start, "you are not a Frenchman?"

"Nay," rejoined Albert, "I am a Frenchman altogether, and have never borne arms against my country. But I have been fighting under the capital's banners for the emperor and some of the princes of Germany, and also in company with the Teutonic knights against the pagans of Prussia."

"That, at all events, is a noble cause," replied the priest; "but you may chance to meet with worse than pagans here, my young friend. Yet I will willingly take your escort; for

many of the bands of revolted peasants separate into parties of four and five; and I cannot but think that the arm of one gentleman such as yourself is equal to those of four or five villeins."

The blood mounted again into the cheek of Albert Denyn, as he recollected how short a time he had possessed a right to bear the honourable name which the priest gave him, and how lately the contemptuous epithet applied to the peasantry might as well have been used to designate himself.

"I really do not know, father," he answered, "but I will do my best to protect you; yet I cannot but think that amongst the peasantry of every country there are as strong arms, as brave hearts, and as high spirits as amongst the nobles. We see that it is so in England, where there is no such class as that of villeins; and doubtless it would be the same with the peasants of France if they had the same advantages."

The priest gazed at him with a look of surprise, and after a moment's silence exclaimed, "You astonish me! But you have been long out of France, my son, and you do not know what has happened here, what is happening every day in this land of our birth. You have not heard of all the horrors that have been perpetrated within the last three months."

"No, no," cried Albert Denyn, with no slight surprise and apprehension, as many an incident in the past recurred to his mind—seeds which might now be producing sad and terrible fruits for the nobility of France. "No, no, I have heard nothing. No news has reached me from my native country since I quitted it in the autumn of last year."

"Then," said the priest, "there is a mournful tale to be told, and perchance the news may come sadly to your own heart. The peasantry, oppressed as perhaps they really were, suffering as they certainly were, have risen in Beauvoisis, have spread over Picardy, and, as it were, mad with sorrow and endurance, are now in their frenzy committing crimes that will shut them out from the support of all good men, from the mitigation of their woes and wrongs, and from the attainment of the very ends they aim at. But in the meanwhile all is giving way before them: castle after castle has been taken; towns have been stormed; the most dreadful massacres have been committed; blood, desolation, and destruction are spreading over the whole face of France; and those whom honourable warfare had spared, and the sword of the marauder had not yet reached, are falling by thousands under the scythes and flails of these wild madmen."

"But they must have a leader," exclaimed Albert Denyn: "have any of the nobles or of the townspeople joined them?"

"None of the nobles," replied the priest, "and but few of the communes as yet; but it would appear that the latter will soon give them too terrible help. In the mean time they are led by a fiend incarnate, whose heart Satan must possess entirely, for he has endowed his brain with talents which are used but for the purposes of desolation and destruction. No one seems to stand before him, no power has been found capable of opposing him; and with the rude and unpractised hands of peasantry he has accomplished enterprises that would have set regular armies at defiance."

"What is his name?" exclaimed Albert Denyn, starting up with a degree of emotion, which the good priest did not understand, though the reader perhaps may. "What is his name, good father?"

"His name is William Caillet," replied the priest: "do you know him?"

But before the last words were uttered, Albert Denyn had drawn his sword from the scabbard, and holding up the cross of the hilt before his eyes, as was very common in the oaths of that day, he exclaimed, "God give him to my sword, as I swear never to use it, except in self-defence or for the protection of the wronged, against any other than him and his, till he or I be dead!"

"Amen!" said the priest; "and God's blessing go with you, young man! But tell me more of this business: you seem to have been acquainted with this fiend in former days."

"I was, I was!" replied Albert Denyn, "and I know to what his infernal schemes tend."

As he spoke, and as the thought presented itself to his mind of all the consequences towards Adela de Mauvinet and her noble father which the successes of William Caillet might produce, a wild feeling of anxiety and alarm took possession of him, and he exclaimed, "Would that the capital were here! What shall I do? Where shall I find men? In Beauvoisis, you said, good father; in Beauvoisis and Picardy: not in Touraine?"

"All over France, my son," replied the priest: "the malady is raging more or less in every part of the country, though most powerfully in Picardy and the Beauvoisis. But come; you are much moved: tell me your history, and perhaps I can counsel you as to your future conduct. After that, we will pray God to give us health and sleep, in the trust that he will guide, guard, and deliver us."

CHAPTER XXX.

By daylight on the following morning Albert Denyn and the priest were on their way towards Paris; but the countenance of the young cavalier had lost all the gaiety which it had presented on the preceding day, and the traces of deep anxiety were to be marked in every line, as he rode on discussing eagerly with his companion all the events which had taken place in France during the preceding winter. It seemed that he could never hear too much of the progress of the Jacquerie. He asked question after question, then paused for a moment to meditate, till some new inquiry suggested itself to his mind; and, although his fellow-traveller gave as distinct answers as he could, all seemed unsatisfactory, leaving a cloud of doubt and trouble on his countenance which no explanation from the good priest could remove.

The truth is, that he found the nobility of France—the warrior class of a warlike nation—those who had affected as peculiarly their own the right of bearing arms and waging battle—had been struck with a general panic by the rising of the peasantry, and instead of making one powerful effort to crush the insurrection, had offered their throats, as it were, to the butchers, who had slain them with merciless determination. He asked himself, what could be the cause of this conduct? Was it, as Caillet had so boldly asserted not long before, that these men were really cowards, and that their courage only consisted in vain boasts and idle pretences? or was there something in the sense of the oppression that they had exercised towards the peasantry, which weighed down their arms and took the spirit from their hearts?

Such were some amongst the questions that Albert Denyn asked himself; but he knew not one-half of the circumstances which combined to paralyse for a time the power of the nobility of France, and, to render the fiery courage which they undoubtedly possessed utterly unavailing against the unarmed multitudes of peasantry by whom they were assailed. The young soldier was not aware that universal disunion reigned

amongst the higher classes; that it was difficult to find three gentlemen in all France who were striving for the same object, acting upon the same principles, or directed by the same views; that during the absence and the imprisonment of the king, the whole realm was torn by contending factions, the capital itself in a state of insurrection against its legitimate prince, and each separate castle throughout the country beleaguered by those who differed from the inhabitants of the neighbouring one in every principle and every purpose, and were often in actual warfare with them.

The sense of common danger had not yet convinced the nobles of the necessity of even temporary union; and consequently, though the ravages of the peasantry spread consternation amongst them, yet each saw his neighbour butchered without making an effort to help him, and often laughed at the fate of his enemy, when the same knife that had murdered him was well-nigh at his own throat.

All these things, however, Albert Denyn had still to learn; and the facts that he saw, without comprehending the causes, at once perplexed, surprised, and dismayed him. Still, amongst the crowd of vague and anxious thoughts which hurried through his brain, there were fears and doubts respecting the fate of the house of Mauvinet which made his heart sink. He knew that it had been the intention of the count to visit his territories in the north of France; though he tried to console himself with the hope that, as the year had been far advanced when he left Touraine, the purpose of the Lord of Mauvinet might have been delayed in execution, and that he and his household might have remained in a part of the country where the insurrection of the peasantry was not so general, and where the strength of his château would enable him to set such foes at defiance.

The good priest marked the trouble of his young companion's mind, and sought as far as possible to give him relief; but although Albert had afforded him some insight into his previous history, he did not completely comprehend all the deep anxiety that the young soldier felt; for there were parts of his connection with the house of Mauvinet which Albert Denyn would to no living ear have uttered for the wealth of worlds; and those were more especially the parts which gave poignancy, almost agony, to the apprehensions which he entertained.

Of the Lord of Mauvinet himself the priest could tell nothing. He had some vague recollection of that nobleman having been amongst those summoned to hold council with

the regent in Paris; and certainly he had not heard his name mentioned as one of those who had suffered from the ravages of the peasantry; but, nevertheless—although he saw that the young soldier was more deeply interested in the fate of that nobleman than was usual with any dependant of a noble house—yet he was forced to admit that he himself might have been murdered and his castle destroyed without the tidings reaching that part of the country.

"It was more than three weeks," he added to what he had been saying on the subject, "before the unfortunate news which now takes me to Paris found its way to my dwelling, though 'tis but a two days' journey."

"May I ask," said Albert Denyn, "what is the nature of your errand, good father?" I have seen that you were satisfied—very sad; but I did not like to inquire the cause till you alluded to it yourself."

"There is no secret in it, my son," replied the priest; "but though sympathy is a soothing thing, I did not mention the occasion of my grief, because I believe that we have no right to load others with the burden of our sorrow unless they themselves seek to share it. I will tell you the story, however, to-night, at our first resting-place, if we reach one in safety; but the tale is somewhat long, and might bring tears into my eyes."

Albert pressed him no farther, but rode on conversing with the good old man of other matters, and remarking from time to time the changes which became apparent in the face of the country. After pursuing their journey for about two hours, everything indicated that they were entering those districts which for the last three months had been a scene of continued strife and confusion. Here and there a smoking ruin was to be seen, sometimes of a village, sometimes of a castle. All the small towns through which the road passed were fortified and barricaded at each end, in the best manner that the inhabitants could devise. No man was met altogether unarmed, except in the very smallest hamlets; and at the first sight of Albert Denyn's crest and plume, the shepherds in the fields, unless two or three were together, set off running towards the nearest wood, leaving their sheep in charge of the dogs. The stumps of fruit-trees which had been cut down and used for firing, in those parts of the country where no forests were near, showed the lawless recklessness of the bands which had swept the land during the winter; and in many places fields matted and unsown, but rank with weeds and wild grass, told the tale of depopulation and despair.

A little before sunset the two travellers rode up the gentle slope of a hill, from the summit of which they perceived a wide plain, slightly undulating and marked by long lines of light and shade, as the sweeps of the ground and the masses of distant woods caught or obstructed the rays of the declining sun. The golden light of evening was in the sky, and spread more or less over the whole scene, mingling even with the growing shadows, and giving them a warmer and a richer hue. In the foreground, at about a mile's distance, was a village embosomed in elms, with the square spire of the church, newly-built and white with freshness, rising above the trees and shining bright in the evening sun. Everything was beautiful, and calm, and peaceful; and it was scarcely possible to conceive that the fierce and cruel passions which were ravaging the rest of France could exercise their virulent activity in so tranquil a scene as that.

It was so, however; and as Albert Denyn and his companion rode into the village, they found the grass growing in the little street as thickly as in a meadow. Several of the houses had been burnt, others were scorched with fire, which had been afterwards extinguished, and the only buildings that seemed to have escaped were the church and the priest's house.

As they passed by the churchyard, Albert perceived a number of freshly-made graves, which told their own sad tale, and he inquired no further. It was to the habitation of the curate that they now bent their way; and Albert's fellow-traveller knocked some time for admittance without the door being opened, while first a female and then a male head examined the wayfarers closely through a window at the side. At length a strong middle-aged man in a priest's garments opened the door, and instantly recognising one of his visitors, exclaimed, "Ah! Monsieur Dacy, is it you?"

"It is, indeed, my good brother," replied the curé. "I have come with a young friend here to claim your hospitality for a night; shall we be safe?"

"Oh, yes," answered the priest, "quite safe will you be, though I always like to see who it is before I draw a bolt, that I may be prepared for the worst. Yet those burnt houses at the end of the place, and those fresh graves, are as good as a fortification. If any band of plunderers come, they know by those signs that others have been here before them, and they turn away again for some better booty. You shall be right welcome, my good friend; but how is it, Father Dacy, that you leave your own pleasant village, which, as I hear, escaped hitherto?"

"I will tell you presently," said the good priest; "but let us first take care of our beasts."

The welcome that the travellers received was hearty and kind: the food which the priest set before them was indeed as homely as it well could be, but it was abundant; and the evening passed tranquilly, though the chief topic of conversation during the meal was the sorrows and miseries of the land. Such a subject naturally led the good curé Dacy to explain the cause of his present journey; and although he had told Albert that the tale was long, yet the pain that the relation occasioned to himself made him shorten it as much as possible.

"You know," he began, addressing the priest of the place, "that my brother, animated by a more ambitious spirit than I ever possessed, had raised himself high in the world, and had become one of the advocates-general of the king."

"Had?" exclaimed the priest: "you speak as if he were no longer."

"Neither is he," answered the curé Dacy, "for he is in a bloody grave. He was one of those bold or brave men who most strongly advised the Duke of Normandy to resist the ambition of the Prévôt Marcel, and with the Marshals of Normandy and Champagne drew upon themselves the anger of the whole faction. The great men escaped; but my poor brother, in passing through the streets with his daughter, just at the time that the bad King of Navarre was haranguing the people in the Pré aux Clercs, was attacked by a furious mob, and fled into the shop of a confectioner for safety. The man would willingly have saved him and his child, and was putting up the boards before his shop to keep the people out; but ere he could do it, three or four leaped upon the booth where his wares were exposed and sprang into the inside. My brother defended himself well with a beam he had caught up; his poor child clung to the knees of his assassins and besought them to be merciful; but in spite of all, they murdered him before her very eyes, and would most likely have killed her also, as she lay fainting and deluged with her father's blood, had not Marcel himself come by at that moment and rescued her from their hands. As soon as she could she sent messengers to me, beseeching me to come as speedily as possible; for in the house of the prévôt she is without protection, and surrounded by the youth of a wild, licentious party, who have as little respect for innocence as they have for law or order. I am, therefore, hastening to Paris to take her quickly from amongst them, though heaven only knows whether I shall

ever return alive myself, or whether they will suffer her to accompany me."

After the curé Dacy stopped, Albert Denyn remained for a moment or two in deep thought, while the good priest of the place spoke a few words of comfort to his sorrowing brother. At length, however, the young soldier looked up, and asked, though still with an air of meditation, "Is the King of Navarre, then, still in Paris?"

"Ay, my son," answered Monsieur Dacy; "not only is he in Paris, but he and Marcel rule all there, so that the life of the regent himself is every hour in danger."

"Can he aid," demanded Albert, "in making them give your niece up to you, and in securing your safety and free departure?"

"None so much," replied the priest; "for they report that Marcel is but his tool, and totally dependent upon him."

"Well, then," said Albert Denyn, "perhaps I can help you more than either I or you expected."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Dacy with much surprise; "do you know him, then?"

"No," answered Albert with a smile; "I do not know him, and cannot well explain to you the whole matter. This much I may say, however: I have letters to him both from the Count de Foix and the noble Captal de Buch, and he is likely to attend to anything that I may ask."

"God be praised, then!" cried the priest; "God be praised for sending you to my assistance, young man; for this King of Navarre is as lawless as any of the other rovers that torture our poor land of France. We are told that his partisans are even more cruel and barbarous than the rest, and as for himself, nothing stays him but the consideration of his own pleasure or his own interest."

"A sweet character, good father," replied Albert Denyn; "but it will be for his own interest to attend to what I say."

"Will it so?" exclaimed a voice very different in tone and accent from any of those which had been yet speaking. All eyes were directed at once to the low narrow door of the small chamber, just behind the back of Albert Denyn. It had been left ajar to give air to the room, which was close and hot; and it was opening as Albert turned his head, presenting a sight that made him instantly rise, front the doorway, and without further ceremony draw his sword from the sheath.

"Put up, put up your sword," said the voice which had just spoken, and at the same moment a person entered the room; completely armed except the head, and having nothing in his

hand but a leading-staff, while a page followed with his helmet, and two or three men-at-arms were seen looking over his shoulder. He was somewhat less than the middle size, but formed with wonderful grace, and his countenance was as beautiful as it was possible to conceive—somewhat effeminate indeed in features, and gentle in expression. The tone of his voice, too, harmonised perfectly with the rest, being peculiarly melodious and soft; and there was even a degree of languor in his sleepy dark eye, which gave the idea of a character and disposition very different from those of the turbulent, ruthless, wily person who now stood before the young soldier and his companion. “Put up your sword, young gentlemen,” he said, “for you can do nothing with it: we are many and you are few.”

“Very true,” replied Albert Denyn; “but few have often done much against many, and therefore I do not put up my sword until I know what is your purpose, fair sir. Neither will it be very safe,” he added, “to advance another step farther till you have explained that purpose.”

“It is quite peaceable,” answered the stranger, regarding the youthful man-at-arms with a smile. “The truth is, that having ridden somewhat late, my horses being tired, and my men in need of repose, I have come hither to seek a night’s lodging, without the intention of hurting any one—no, not even the good priest who was giving me so high a character but now. I shall take no notice of his words, let him rest assured.”

“Doubtless your grace will not,” said Albert Denyn; “for to an honourable man a thing so overheard must be as if it had never been spoken.”

“Not on that account,” replied the King of Navarre—for he it was—“but because the good priest’s speech suited me well. Every one has his taste in this world, and the character which would please others may not please me. It is a very wholesome and good reputation that I have found in his mouth—one that I have long sought to establish. No man after that can mistake my views and purposes. He who trusts me is a fool, except it be my interest to keep faith with him; he who fears me is wise, and will take care not to offend me. Now, good father, see to the lodging of my people, and give me a share of your supper.” Thus saying, he passed by Albert Denyn and took a seat calmly at the table.

The young gentleman put his sword into the sheath, and the two priests stood by, gazing for a moment or two upon the King of Navarre and his followers with astonishment not

unmixed with fear. At length, however, the king made an impatient movement with his hand, saying, "Do as I bid you!" and the curate of the place quietly slipped out of the place to follow the orders he had received.

"And now, young gentleman," continued the King of Navarre, drawing one of the dishes towards him, and loading a clean trencher which happened to stand near with its contents; "tell me, while I eat my supper, how it may be my interest to attend to what you say? Such I think was your expression just as I entered."

"It was so, your grace," replied Albert Denyn; "and the reason I made use of such words was, that I bear you letters of some importance from the noble Captal de Buch, who allows me to add that he holds me in some esteem."

"That alters the case," rejoined the King of Navarre, "and you have said right: I have too high a regard for my cousin the captal not to treat his messengers with all reverence. Besides," he continued with a laugh, "whether I regard him or not, the captal can serve me. Where are your letters, young man? Yet keep them," he added, seeing Albert Denyn put his hand into the bosom of his surcoat. "I am sleepy to-night; you shall deliver them to me to-morrow in Paris. I shall set off at four in the morning: you come after quickly, and seek me at the Abbey of St. Germain des Prés. Bring yon good priest with you, too; and if he have any favour to require at our hands, we will grant it him in consideration of the sweet character that he gave us not long since."

The dark smile which followed the latter part of his speech might well make the good curé Dacy feel somewhat doubtful of the king's intentions; but Charles the Bad took no farther notice of him during the few minutes that he stayed in the room, finishing his supper quickly, and then betaking himself to sleep in the priest's own bed.

Every one found a place of repose where he could for the night, and early on the following morning the King of Navarre departed, leaving much fewer traces of his visit behind him than was usually the case. Some of his soldiers indeed had slept on straw in the church, and, as might be expected, the door of the sacristy was found broken open, and the place itself stripped of all that it contained; for where Charles appeared in person very little reverence was shown to the church; and those things which even the most ruthless bands of plunderers spared, were sure to disappear during one of his visitations.

CHAPTER XXXI.

It was about three o'clock on the following day when Albert Denyn and the good priest Dacy entered the city of Paris; but let the reader remember, that by those words, *the city of Paris*, we do not in the least mean to imply anything like that great and extraordinary abode of talent and folly, virtue and crime, distinguished by a similar name in the present day. The city of Paris at that period was inferior in extent to many provincial towns of our own times, and very much inferior, indeed, to any provincial town in point of comfort and accommodation, cleanliness and neatness. Only a few of the principal streets were paved; all were so narrow that in most of them not more than three horses could go abreast; sand, filth, and ordure filled the lesser thoroughfares; and the ways were seldom if ever cleansed, except when the autumnal inundations of the Seine washed away the dirt that had accumulated during the past year, and sometimes carried off several of the houses likewise. Here and there indeed rose, from the midst of the wild and confused mass of hovels and cabins which then formed the French capital, some of those splendid monuments of architectural genius which are never sufficiently marvelled at and appreciated, except when we look to the state of society and art at the time of their construction. Here appeared a magnificent church, there a vast abbey, here a noble palace, and everywhere was seen, amidst wooden houses and mere huts, tracery of stone-work so fine and beautiful, that modern times have never been able to approach the excellence of the execution, even when they have ventured upon the labour and expense.

Albert Denyn, however, and the priest were both full of anxious thoughts, which left little room for new impressions to penetrate. When man is at ease in himself, and the mind as it were idle in its empty house, it is natural that the spirit should look out of the window and mark everything that is passing in the world without; but when there is business within of high moment, the casements are closed against

external objects, while the soul holds council in the secret chambers of the heart.

The young cavalier and his companion then rode along in silence, giving little attention to the mere physical appearance of the city they had entered, the one having seen it many times before, the other having come lately from foreign towns at that time far more splendid than the French capital itself.

There were other sights, however, of a kind calculated to awaken Albert Denyn's habit of observation, which now crossed his eyes as he rode on guided by the priest. Crowds of people were seen hurrying hither and thither, and every now and then four or five persons as they passed would pause to gaze at the two wayfarers who were entering the great city, regarding them apparently with no very friendly looks, and making comments as they went on, which the young soldier judged, from a word or two that reached his ear, to be of a somewhat offensive and menacing nature. He remarked, too, that almost all whom he met, whatever might be the variety of colours and materials in other parts of their garments, had one piece of dress uniformly alike. This was the hood, which was the general covering for the head used in that day; and not one Parisian out of a hundred that the travellers passed in the streets was without a *chaperon*, as it was called, of parti-coloured cloth or silk, half red, half green, with an enamelled clasp under the chin.

"How is it, good father," demanded Albert, "that the people of Paris have their hoods all of one colour? Is there any law to that effect?"

"The law of fear, my son," answered the priest: that parti-coloured hood is the mark of the prévôt's party; and if you were to look at the clasp, you would find enamelled on it the words "*A bonne fin.*" It was taken at first only by those who thought the prévôt was right; but since men have found that life is not safe without that mark of partisanship, even those that hate him the most have adopted it too. God send that we get much farther in safety without it!"

Scarcely had he spoken when a body of armed citizens stopped Albert Denyn and himself, demanding, "Where go you, gentlemen travellers, and who are you for?"

Albert Denyn answered at once that they were going towards the Abbey of St. Germain des Prés, to seek the King of Navarre; and, as it fortunately happened that the interrogators were of the prévôt's party, with whom Charles the Bad was leagued, the reply was satisfactory, and the two were told to pass on their way in peace.

They met with no further interruption till they reached the small square before the eastern gate of the Abbey of St. Germain, where on the one side appeared the inn or hostelry of the Red Hat, on the other the bridge of the abbey ditch, and between the church and the tavern that ancient instrument of disgrace and punishment, the pillory.

A sturdy porter stopped Albert, Denyn and his companion at the entrance of the monastery, demanding whom they sought, and on the reply being given, told them that the King of Navarre was at that moment in the *chapin clos* of the Prés aux Clercs hard by; and had left particular orders that, if any messengers from the Captal de Buch came to seek him, they were to be sent thither with all speed. Albert and his companion accordingly turned the heads of their beasts towards the rich meadows that at that time extended westward of the Abbey of St. Germain, and soon reached a spot where the murmuring sound of many voices showed that a number of people were assembled. In a minute or two after, entering the space set apart for judicial combats, they found themselves in the midst of eight or ten thousand Parisians, who were crowding round the raised platform of wood from which the judges of the field generally witnessed the duels that took place below.

The front seats on the scaffold were now occupied by the King of Navarre, his officers and partisans; and from it he was addressing the people in a strain of eloquent blandishment well calculated to gain the affections of the easily-flattered multitude. At the same time, it was evident that he laboured hard to inspire them with a great idea of his power and influence, and to show, that although the dauphin and royal family of France had proclaimed themselves his enemies, yet many of the greatest men in Europe held him in high veneration and respect. He was mentioning the names of several great leaders as friendly to him when Albert Denyn entered; and it now became evident with what view he had refused to receive the letters which the young soldier bore him from the Captal de Buch on the preceding night, reserving them to work their effect on the Parisians at the present moment.

"Who have we here?" he exclaimed as his eyes fell upon Albert. "What seek you, young gentleman?" Albert's errand was soon told; but the Navarrese monarch caused him to ascend the platform and deliver his despatches before the eyes of the crowd. He then affected to consult with him long apart, and in the end announced to the willing ears around,

that his noble cousin, the famous Captal de Buch, had promised him the aid of his whole forces and his great renown. He pointed out Albert as a young gentleman high in the confidence of the captal, sent on purpose from Germany to hear him tidings of his speedy approach; and he then turned to the young soldier, asking what guerdon he would have for the good intelligence he bore.

Albert smiled at the farce that was played before his eyes, not having yet sufficiently mingled in the busy scenes of life to know that, in nine cases out of ten, "all the world is indeed a stage," though in a different sense from that of the great poet, "and all the men and women merely players."

He forgot not, however, the errand of his reverend companion, Monsieur Dacy, and he replied in a low voice, "I ask no guerdon, your grace; but I do beseech you to take measures that this good man's niece shall be given up to him, and that he shall have free passage with her out of Paris."

"Let me hear more of this story," said the Navarrese; "speak quick and low, and I will do what I can."

Albert answered briefly, and the wily King of Navarre seemed to listen to him with one ear, while with the other he gathered the sense of a long and vehement oration, which was commenced, as if to fill up the time, by a tall powerful man with a parti-coloured *chaperon*, who stood near the king. Ever and anon, too, Charles the Bad would interrupt his conference with Albert, either to address a word to the speaker in a low tone, or to express his loud approbation of what was uttered.

"You say she is in the prévôt's house?" he proceeded, talking to the young soldier; and then added aloud, "It is true, every word of it. Excellent! excellent! Keep off the subject of the money, Marcel. Now, my friend, she shall be set free, and all aid given to good Monsieur Dacy. Our good Parisians will not hurt him: they have had one out of the family, and that is surely enough. Now, Marcel, dismiss them with a benediction, and speak to me here."

The last words were spoken to the orator; and Albert turned to gaze upon the famous man before him, not doubting, from the name by which the King of Navarre addressed him, that the person who had been haranguing the people was the well-known Prévôt des Marchands. His countenance was somewhat bull-like, but in other respects not disagreeable; and there certainly was a high intellectual expression in the forehead and eyes, though the mouth and the lower part of the face were heavy and earthly.

Marcel soon brought his speech to a conclusion upon the hint of his confederate, and the multitude began slowly to disperse, while the prévôt came closer to the King of Navarre and heard what he had to tell him, examining Albert Denyn narrowly from head to foot as he listened.

"And you are the lady's lover, I suppose?" he said, addressing the young soldier as soon as the King of Navarre had finished.

"You mistake, my good sir," replied Albert, in a tone of very little reverence: "I never saw her in my life. It is for her uncle I am moved."

"A disinterested youth!" cried the prévôt with a sneer: "we must not keep him long in Paris, or the metal will get tarnished. However, if that be her uncle, he shall have my help to take her from my house as quickly as may be; for my wild nephew would fain have her for his paramour, and I approve not of such follies. You should thank me for saving her from the rough hands into which she had fallen when I found her," continued Marcel, addressing the priest. But the good old man shook his head with a mournful air, answering, "My brother's blood, sir, were surely weight enough upon the hand that slew him, without the blood of his unhappy child."

"I slew not your brother," replied the prévôt sternly: "he was partly answerable for his own death. Why did he meddle with things that concerned him not? However, you shall have your niece, and God speed you home with her! Who has an inkhorn here? Maître Jacques, you have some parchment; give me two fingers' breadth."

Thus saying, he wrote a few words hastily on the parchment, commanding those of his household to give up to Curé Dacy the daughter of his brother, and to suffer him to depart with her in peace. He then put the order into the poor man's hand, who received it with tears of joy; and taking leave of Albert Denyn, not without regret, left the spot to seek his niece at once.

The King of Navarre and the prévôt stood silent for a moment after Dacy had left them, gazing, apparently with some interest, at the young soldier, who had cast down his eyes thoughtfully on the ground, and remained for a very brief space absorbed in deep meditation, though surrounded by scenes and people that might well have called for active presence of mind.

"And so now, young man, you are thinking what you are to do next?" said the prévôt, as Albert looked up again.

"Not so," replied Albert; "I have no doubts of the kind."

"Why? how then do you intend to bestow yourself?" demanded the prévôt.

"I intend to take up my lodging for the night at the sign of the Red Hat, before the gate of the Abbey," Albert replied; "and to-morrow I set forth again either for Touraine or the Beauvoisis, according to the information I receive this night."

The prévôt looked at him for an instant in silence, and then asked, "Will you sup with me to night, young gentleman?"

Albert's first impulse was to refuse; but the moment after, he thought, "I shall hear more there of all that is passing in France than I can anywhere else;" and he accordingly answered, "Willingly, sir: at what hour?"

"At the hour of seven," replied the prévôt; and Albert, remounting his horse, rode away towards the inn which he had seen before the gate of the abbey of St Germain.

"What want you with that youth?" demanded the King of Navarre, as Albert turned from them: "he is a clever lad, but raw; yet doubtless a stout man-at-arms."

"I want many such, most noble king," answered the prévôt: "we are all so busy with such things that it is well to have help at hand in case of need. Six strong men such as that in his ante-room would have saved Charles of Spain from the knife."

"I think not, Marcel," replied the King of Navarre, speaking of the murder which he had committed not long before, with the same calm carelessness with which the prévôt had himself alluded to it—"I think not; for I had twenty such with me, so that six would have been of small service. However, I beseech you, take care of the youth here in Paris; for the capital writes in such terms of him, that were any evil to happen to him it might deprive us of our best hopes. You know the capital as well as I do."

"I will guard him as the apple of my eye," replied the prévôt; "but let us go."

CHAPTER XXXII.

ALBERT DENYN found his way back to the Chapeau Rouge, and, like all true men-of-arms, provided for the accommodation of his horse before he attended in any degree to himself. Nor, to say the truth, did he feel disposed to eat; for there had come upon him that feeling of oppression which the thoughtful and imaginative mind experiences in scenes through which the mere man of action passes with no other sensation than that of animal exertion. If he have but a heart, the man of the strongest intellect and the most daring courage will find at certain moments, when surrounded by the whirlwind of passions and the storm of party strife, a shadow fall upon him like that of a storm-cloud rushing over a summer sky. Without any definite reflections upon the emptiness of human endeavours, without any philosophic thought upon the baseness of human nature and the lowness of even man's highest earthly objects, a sensation of weariness and disgust at all that is passing around us will benumb us for a time, till some strong excitement calls us to mingle in the very scenes, to take part in the very deeds, which had produced the loathing. Even then we rise up like a slave to his appointed labour, and feel that we are but buckling on the burden of human destiny, till we are fully launched in a sea of exertions, and the more earthly portion of our mixed life in the excitement of action overcomes the heavenly.

Albert entered the inn, and as the hour for supper had not yet arrived, sat down at a table in the hall, and leaned his head upon his hand in deep thought. He had no active part in the things that were passing around him; he had but to stand by and see the busy passions and fierce deeds of others; to witness the cunning of one, the bold knavery of another, the fierce ambition of a third, and the evils that were the result of all. He had but, as I have said, to stand by and look on; and it seemed as if the splendid veil with which all the things of earth invest themselves had dropped down, and that he beheld at once the dust and ashes of which the whole

is composed. These moments come to every one at some time or another in life—moments when we look, as it were, prophetically into the coffin of human desire and enjoyment, and see the mouldering bones and crumbling clay of those two bright children of earthly existence, as at some future period we may expect to behold them from the height of an after and a better state of being.

His thoughts first turned to the King of Navarre, and then to Marcel, and he asked himself, "Are these the men for whom France sheds her best blood? How vain, how very vain, are all the quarrels and dissensions of life! Well might the good prior say, that sooner or later I would see that the world I would not quit is a world of emptiness and sorrow, with scarce a grain of real gold to gild it for the eyes of children."

Such was for some time the train that his thoughts followed, but we need not pursue them farther ourselves. Almost every one in the end rises from such contemplations better, perhaps, than when he sat down, but still with a feeling that they too are vain; that, tied as we are to the burden of mortal existence, it is useless to inquire of what it is composed, or to try in a fine balance the weight of that which we are bound to bear.

After resting thus, then, for about half-an-hour, Albert rose up suddenly, and tightening the belt that held his sword, strolled forth into the streets, saying to himself, "I must gather some tidings in the city of what is passing in Touraine or Beauvoisis."

Who ever saw Paris, except in the dead of night, without her myriads rushing here and there in the fierce pursuit of pleasure, vengeance, amusement, or folly? If the gay capital ever was still, such was not the case when Albert Denyn now issued out of the Chapeau Rouge. For the moment, indeed, the vicinity of the Abbey of St. Germain was comparatively deserted, the tide having flowed another way after the prévôt and the King of Navarre had left the Pré aux Clercs; but a very few minutes brought the young soldier into the midst of crowds of men, and women, and children, all apparently as busy and as gay as if the whole world were happiness and industry. Everywhere were seen the chaperons of red and green, and even the women affected the well-known colours in their garments: so that any one passing along the thronged thoroughfares without such a symbol might well be remarked by the eager eyes of a population always ready to quarrel with those who gave them any or no offence. Scarcely had

Albert reached the bridge when five strong men, walking nearly abreast and talking vehemently, stopped him rudely and examined him from head to foot, exclaiming, "Where is the chaperon? where the clasp?"

Albert Denyn felt his blood boil within him, and would willingly have replied with the sword; but outmatched as he was by the persons who opposed his passage, and knowing well that if even he escaped from them, he was surrounded on every side by partisans of the same faction, he answered, with an appearance of calmness that he did not feel, "I have been but a few hours at Paris—let me go on."

"Ay, that is some reason," replied one of the men.

"Why, he is the man who was speaking with the prévôt," said another.

"One of those English dogs!" exclaimed a third: "the prévôt is too fond of them;" but at the same time the speaker drew back with the rest, and suffered the young soldier to pursue his way. For some distance he was not subject to any further annoyance, although the peculiar air and manner which always indicates the stranger in a town that he has not frequently or lately visited, pointed him out to the eyes of the Parisians, and called attention to his want of those party symbols under which alone safety was to be found in the French capital.

At length, however, as he entered one of the streets leading from the water's edge towards the great Hôtel of St. Paul, he observed a crowd of people gathered together at the distance of some three hundred yards from him, and as he approached he heard remonstrances uttered in a loud voice, mingled with urgent complaints and entreaties. There was a sufficient portion of the chivalrous spirit in the breast of Albert Denyn to make him take part eagerly with the weak and the distressed; and although he knew that his single hand could be of but little service where so many persons were engaged, he could not refrain from scanning the crowd with his eyes as he approached, in order to ascertain who was the sufferer whose entreaties met his ear.

For a moment or two he could only see a number of people all pressing round one particular spot; but the next moment, as the mob swayed to and fro, he caught the glimpse of a man in a clerical habit, and thought he recognised the form of the good curé Dacy. He was instantly springing forward to satisfy himself of the fact, when a hand was laid upon his arm; and turning sharply round, he beheld another group of soldiery, who had come up the street behind him with a

quicker step than his own. The face of the person who held him appeared familiar to him, though, in the various scenes of strife and contention in which he had lately been engaged, he had seen so many men of different grades and characters that he could not connect it with any particular train of events. There was a smile upon the soldier's countenance, too, which seemed to show that his recollection was better than that of Albert himself.

The latter, however, hastily disengaged his arm, exclaiming, "I cannot stop! They are hurting the poor old man, and I must help him. Who are you? what do you want?"

"Do you not recollect the Captain Griffith?" said the personage who had detained him. "But what are you going to do with these fellows? They are too many for you, if I rightly judge what you are about."

"Then give me some help," cried Albert Denyn; "they are maltreating the poor old man Dacy, and his niece too: do you not see her?"

"Oho! is that the game?" exclaimed Griffith. "Well, lead on; we will aid you, though it is no business of ours after all. Still it keeps one in exercise, and that is something in this world."

Albert Denyn darted forward, followed by Griffith and the four or five free companions who were with him, and, pushing their way with fierce recklessness through the mob, they were soon in the centre, where a young man of handsome person, but of somewhat loose and dissolute appearance, was dragging a very lovely girl away from the arms of the good old curé Dacy, in spite of her tears, remonstrances, and cries. The people who stood round took little part in the matter, except by laughter at the poor girl's agony and the priest's grief and reproaches.

The scene, however, was changed in a minute; for Albert Denyn with one blow of his gauntleted hand struck the young rascal to the ground, while Dacy caught his niece in his arms; and Griffith and his companions drove back the crowd.

Swords were instantly drawn on the part of the Parisians; but Albert Denyn, unsheathing his own weapon, placed his foot on the prostrate body of the youth he had knocked down, exclaiming, "Take care, my men! take care, or worse may come of it. This fellow I have found violating the commands of the prévôt, and I will drag him to the Hôtel de Ville, or kill him if he resists."

"Why, it is the prévôt's own nephew!" cried several voices from the crowd.

"I know that," replied Albert Denyn, "or at least I guess it from what the prévôt said."

The people seemed to hesitate in consequence of what they heard and saw; and probably the matter might have ended peaceably, but some of those on the right pressed rather sharply upon one of Griffith's men, who, not being of a very patient and enduring race, struck the Parisian who was next to him a blow in the face with the pommel of his sword, which dashed out three of his front teeth, and cast him back bleeding on those behind.

An instant shout of indignation burst from the crowd, and a tremendous rush was made upon the small knot of soldiery who were gathered together round the good curé Dacy and his niece. Albert Denyn thrust himself between the poor girl and the foremost of the mob. Griffith's practised sword waved not in vain; and, to say truth, though the numbers who were opposed to the Parisians were but small, yet their great superiority in the use of their arms, their daring habits, vigorous frames, and thorough contempt for their enemies, rendered each man there in reality equal to four or five of their assailants, so that the strife was by no means as unequal as it appeared.

After but a few blows had been given, the armed crowd recoiled, with several severe gashes apparent amongst the foremost of them; and Griffith, with Albert Denyn, as if comprehending at once what was best to be done, began to force their way onward, the rest surrounding the poor girl and her uncle, as if to guide them in safety towards the Hôtel de Ville.

For a minute or two the mob continued to give way before the brandished weapons of the adventurers; but it soon became apparent that numbers were flocking up to the aid of the Parisians. A more formidable attack than ever was made at the corner of the next street; and one of Griffith's men was brought to the ground, stunned by the blow of a mace, which dented in his steel cap and well-nigh fractured his skull. Griffith himself stepped forward to defend him, but in so doing he left a gap in their little circle. The nephew of the prévôt, who was then again at the head of his people, dashed in with two of the others, in spite of all the efforts of Albert Denyn, and once more seized his prey; and the situation of the young soldier, his companions, and the object of his interest, appeared nearly desperate, when a cry of "Marcel! Marcel! long live the prévôt!" came thundering down the street, and a confused troop of horse and foot

rushed on, driving in the stragglers and making a way into the very heart of the crowd.

"What is this? What is this?" exclaimed the *Prévôt* Marcel, springing to the ground and seizing his nephew with a vehement and angry grasp. "Jean, you are a licentious fool! Did I not forbid this? Did I not give orders that the girl should be suffered to depart?"

As he spoke, he thrust the young man vehemently from him; but at the same instant came first a low murmur, and then a loud shout from the mob, with the words, "Down with the English! Away with the adventurers!"

Marcel looked fiercely round him for a moment, first turning his eyes upon the citizens and then upon his own armed followers. But one or two of the latter had taken up the cry also, and were vociferating with the rest, "Down with them! down with them! down with the English!" The *prévôt* saw that, whatever might be his inclination, he would find but little support among his own people in any endeavour that he might make to protect the adventurers; and like all fierce demagogues, though internally furious at any opposition on the part of those whom he was accustomed to lead blindfold, he determined to temporise and yield to their clamour, with a strong determination of taking vengeance at a future period upon the chief of those who opposed his will.

"Fear not, my friends!" he exclaimed in a loud and impressive tone: "your *prévôt* will do equal justice upon all offenders. Stand back, my men; stand back, and let my train gather round us: we will deal with the Englishmen and treat them according to their deserts."

The aspect of affairs now began to be serious; for Griffith and his companions, and Albert Denyn himself, could catch no glance of recognition upon the *prévôt's* countenance.

"A pretty pass!" cried Griffith, as he saw the forty or fifty well-armed soldiers of which the *prévôt's* train was composed gather in a stern circle round him and the rest, keeping back the crowd, but presenting a much more formidable array than the undisciplined multitude. "Let us stand back to back, my men, for we know not on which side we shall be taken: we can make a pretty little hash of them yet if they come near. Now, Master *Prévôt*, what is it that you mean by this? Are we not your friends, and the friends of the King of Navarre?"

"Not when I find you brawling in the streets," said the *prévôt*, affecting a fierce tone; but the moment after, he beckoned to Albert Denyn, saying, "You at least are a Frenchman—approach and speak to me."

"They came to help me," replied Albert Denyn, "in protecting this poor girl and the priest, who were attacked contrary to your own orders. For good or ill I will take my part with them."

"Well done, my young gallant!" cried Griffith: "you will fear high some of these days."

But in the mean time the prévôt made a quick and angry gesture, exclaiming, "Come hither, I say: you will make mischief speedily. You shall return to them if you please."

Albert Denyn took a step or two forward to the spot where the prévôt stood, close to the old priest and his niece, with his hand still grasping his nephew by the shoulder. It was to the latter, however, that Marcel first spoke. "Get ye gone, Jean," he said, pushing the young man back; "get ye gone to my house, and there wait as if you were a prisoner. I will not be long, and you shall remember this day's fine deeds. There! make your way through the crowd and begone!"

"And you, old man," he continued, turning to the priest, "hie thee hence out of Paris as fast as may be, and take thy pretty mischief with thee: we have causes of contention enough among us already. I know what thou wouldst say, but thou shalt have safe guard and conveyance. Here, Guetry, take four strong men with you; find quickly a litter or a horse for this girl; conduct her and her uncle safely for ten leagues upon their road ere noon to-morrow. You answer for them with your life."

The man to whom he spoke was an old, weather-beaten soldier, whose habit was ever to obey without any comment; and merely nodding his head and saying, "Well, sir, well!" he took the priest by the arm, and drew him and his niece across the little space which had been cleared round the prévôt, towards the side next the river.

"Now, what would you with me?" demanded Albert Denyn. "These men, I tell you, were aiding me to rescue that poor girl, to whom you yourself promised protection and assistance. I now require you to give them an opportunity of going free, if they have done no other wrong than defending the weak and helpless against your vicious rabble of Paris."

"And what would be the consequences if I made the attempt?" asked the prévôt, leaning down his head and speaking low. "They would be torn to pieces, and so should I myself. No, no, that will never do. Go, tell them in a whisper," he continued in the same under-tone—"go tell them in a whisper that there is but one way to save them. If they resist they are lost. Let them seem to submit to my will, go whither I would have them and as I would have them, and I

pledge my salvation that they shall be out of Paris to-morrow."

"How is that?" demanded Albert; but the prévôt made an impatient gesture with his hand, exclaiming, "Go! go quick! there is no time to spare!"

A fresh cry of "Down with the English! down with the adventurers!" confirmed the words of Marcel; and Albert, returning to the side of Griffith, who stood contemplating the menacing looks of the prévôt's followers and the crowd that was seen behind them, with an air of very great indifference, spoke with the leader of the free companions for a moment in a low voice. Ere Griffith could answer, however, the soldiers of the prévôt began to press closer around; and in a moment after, a general rush was made upon the little group in the centre of the circle. One of the assailants went down in an instant by a blow from the hand of Griffith; a second was struck to the earth a little to the left. But ere another stroke could be given, the adventurers and Albert Denyn himself were seized by the hands of the crowd, and most likely would have fared ill had it not been for the prompt and vigorous interference of Marcel, and two or three of his officers who thought fit on this occasion to follow his lead.

"Do not hurt them, do not hurt them!" shouted the prévôt loudly. "Bring them along to the Tour de Nesle; tie them if they resist. By Sainte Gênéviève, I will cleave you down to the mouth, François, if you touch him with that dagger! Take that, then!" and he dashed one of his unruly followers to the ground with a blow from the back of his battle-axe, which drove his iron cap down upon his head.

"I will be obeyed!" continued Marcel: "bring these men on to the Tour de Nesle. They shall be judged and dealt with according to law, but we will have no more murder in the streets. Come, away with them, away with them! and to-morrow they shall have sentence."

"Long live the prévôt! Long live Stephen Marcel!" cried one of the men in the crowd. The rest took it up; and amidst a number of incongruous shouts and exclamations, Albert Denyn, Griffith, and the rest, were hurried on with no very great ceremony or tenderness towards an old tower, which stood by the side of the river at the end of the town. As they came near the building, a number of the people ran on before, to call out the keepers of the prison in order to receive the captives. Marcel himself, who had remounted his horse, was also a little in advance; and as Albert Denyn was hurried past through the low-browed arch of the Tour de

Nesle, he saw the prévôt speaking eagerly to a broad, square-built, heavy-looking man, with a bunch of immense keys in his hand.

In the mean time the prisoners were driven forward; and it so happened that the young follower of the Captal de Buch, being the last in the line, was in the very doorway of a large, dull-looking room on the left of the gate, into which they had thrust his companions, when the person he had seen speaking to the prévôt pushed his way hastily through the soldiery and caught him by the arm, exclaiming, "Not in there, not in there! there are too many there already. Here, Pierre le Nain! take two of them up-stairs; I will put this one in the prison behind."

Albert Denyn saw little more, for he was dragged forward; and ere he well knew which way they were taking him, he was thrust into a small, narrow chamber at the back of the building, the door of which was instantly closed and locked upon him.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

UNDER the shadow of one of those deep old woods whereof we have more than once had occasion to speak—which at that time covered nearly one-third of the whole soil of France, and of which vestiges are still to be met with in almost every part of that fair land—in the dark hours of the night of the bright month of May, sat a group of men round a large watch-fire, whose lurid glare was the fittest light for the deeds of those on whose faces it shone. Gleaming through the bolls of the trees flashed the flame of many more fires; and those who gazed upon that part of the forest from a height might well have thought that some ruthless hand was endeavouring to consume it all.

At the spot which we have mentioned were collected some ten or twelve persons, as different from each other in mind, character, and purposes as it is possible to conceive. There was the hardy, honest peasant of a superior class, who roused up by intolerable wrongs, had joined the Jacquerie, and had been led on step by step to deeds which his soul abhorred.

Close by him sat the rude, relentless ruffian, whose sole object was blood and lust, and who, after being long kept down by the hand of power, now revelled even unto drunkenness in the anarchies of the times. There, too, appeared the

daring freebooter who had long lived upon plunder, and who, finding the Jacquerie a more profitable means of pursuing the same trade, had joined the revolted peasants with many of his band. There, also, was the dull but remorseless Jacques Morne, there Thibault de la Rue, and there William Caillet, still maintaining that superiority over all around which from the first had been the meed of higher intellect and greater energies.

It was strange to see these men, some of whom had been very lately not even clothed in the garb of peasants, but covered with rags or skins, now robed in silk and rich cloth, or decorated with splendid armour and chains of gold. A whole province was theirs; for the first wild attack upon Plessy had not only encouraged their friends, and at once roused the whole peasantry throughout the land, but had by its success struck terror into their enemies, and caused a general consternation wherever the report was heard. Knights and nobles had fled before them; castle after castle had been taken by storm; small towns even had been captured and plundered; and still the cry went forth from many thousands of men in arms, "War to the castle and the palace! Death to the noble and the rich!"

Scenes of horror which no pen can describe, acts of barbarity that imagination can scarcely conceive, not only initiated the peasant into the new trade of the Jacquerie, but bound him to his bloody calling by the irreparable ties of crime. And there they now sat, the leaders of the insurrection, each urging it forward in his own peculiar way, and all contributing by their various passions to its distinctive character and extraordinary success.

Amongst them all, with their furred gowns, their scarlet robes, and their rich embroidery, William Caillet appeared in a garb chosen with that peculiar and careful adaptation of means to an end which so strongly characterised his mind, and blended in such an extraordinary manner with the fierce passions of which he was the slave. No gold, no jewels, no sparkling ornaments appeared upon his person. He was clad in armour of the finest kind, and over all he wore a surcoat of unmingled black. His helmet lay beside him even when he slept, and the only decoration which it displayed was a tall black plume, which, together with his commanding height, he knew would make him an object easy to be distinguished amongst the peasantry whom he had excited to revolt.

It was not, however, to produce an effect upon the enemy that he assumed this peculiarity of dress: he thought more

of the people who surrounded him, and of the danger of losing his influence and command over them. Thus, it was an impression upon their minds that he sought to effect, and for that purpose he chose his garb with care. Every serf who pillaged a nobleman's wardrobe would, he knew, appear in tinsel and glitter; but those plain dark arms, the black plume and coat, had not only something mysterious and solemn in their aspect, but something that harmonised with the character of his own feelings, and especially accorded with the stern, determined severity, the immoveable, unrelenting determination which he found no difficulty in displaying.

He had become frugal of his speech since his first success; he conversed but little with any one, and made confidants of none but those whom he was forced to trust. From time to time, indeed, when anything induced him to suspect that the zeal of his followers began to slacken; that some apprehension of the result produced a momentary hesitation; when he saw them divided in council, or seeking some petty object to the neglect of a greater one; then his wonted eloquence would burst forth in words of fire, and lead all hearts away.

The consequence of this conduct was, that the whole body looked up to him with reverence, not unmingled with fear. Even those, strange as it may seem, who had cast behind them every human apprehension, every holy respect, regarded him with some degree of awe, and obeyed him when he thought fit to command, without a word of opposition or a thought of resistance.

There was but one person who approached him with no such feelings, and that was old Thibault de la Rue. His was a nature totally without deference for anything. He was one of those who were very rare in that age—an utter unbeliever in all that others held sacred; he wanted, in short, the faculty of reverence; and to the very existence of a God he did not give credit, because he could not comprehend the nature of any being worthy of veneration and respect. He believed not in virtue, except such animal qualities as the human creature shares with the brute; and perhaps, if he had inquired strictly into his own heart, he would have found that he only admitted that man might be brave and woman tender, without conceiving that the one could be honest or the other chaste; and yet such are the strange contradictions in our nature, that this unbelieving frame of mind did not exclude superstition. The fact was, he could fear, though he could not reverence.

Not only were splendid dresses around that fire, though

upon rude limbs and unsymmetrical forms, but rich cheer, such as those lips had never tasted before the commencement of that year, was spread out in rough fashion for the leaders of the revolt. Fine trout from the stream and carp from the tank, game of such kind as was then in season, and even the baronial peacock with his spreading tail was there, rudely cooked indeed, but washed down with wine which might have pleased an emperor, the warm vintages of the luxuriant south, brought from afar for those never destined to drink it.

We may well believe that, under such circumstances, but small moderation was observed. Golden hanaps, plundered from this castle and that, passed freely round the circle; and under the daring influence of the grave, the joke, the jest, and the ribald song, passed hither and thither; while similar sounds echoed up from the other fires which had been kindled in every part of the forest, giving the best indication, to any ears that listened, of the wild saturnalia which reigned in one of the fairest provinces of France.

There were only two of the persons present who drank moderately, and consequently were more silent—Caillet and Thibault de la Rue. The first scarcely uttered a word to any one, often passed the cup untouched, and gazed with his large flashing eyes full upon the blazing pile before him, as if giving it back fire for fire. Thibault la Rue, on his part, spoke somewhat more; glanced round the scene about him with keen, small, serpent-like eyes; and ever and anon, as he marked the traces of coming drunkenness in the vacant looks and dropping jaws of his companions, a withering smile of ineffable scorn, and as it were of hatred for the whole human race, glanced over his lip and passed away in an instant. His words, though sweet in tone and accompanied with a bland expression, were generally venomously bitter, searching out with terrible sagacity the tender point in every one to whom he spoke, and plunging in a dagger where it was least expected.

To Caillet, indeed, that night his language was peculiarly gentle. There was a honeyed smoothness about it which did more to put the keen leader of the insurrection upon his guard than if he had openly avowed the most hostile purposes. In one respect Caillet had mistaken the character of Thibault la Rue: he knew well his passion for gold, and had in their late successes pampered it to the utmost; but he had fancied that passion to be his only one. He believed that in him, as so often happens in the world, avarice had swallowed up every other feeling.

In this, however, he erred: the love of power was strong in the heart of the old man. He cared not, indeed, whether he ruled openly or by another; but still he was well pleased to rule; to exercise his cunning and his skill in guiding, directing, commanding; and he could not bear to see even Caillet himself, though he knew and felt his superior genius, completely independent of his sway by the influence he had gained over his fellow-insurgents. He had resolved, then, long before this period, that such a state of things should be changed, and as his whole spirit was intrigue, he took no small delight in working for his own ends.

Let it not be supposed, indeed, that his design was to overthrow Caillet, for he saw too clearly that such an event as that man's fall must prove the destruction of all around. But he sought to gain such power over Caillet himself, as through him to govern the whole. Circumstances, as we shall soon see, had up to this point wonderfully favoured his schemes; but this was one of those critical instants in which there was likely to be a struggle; and it was his object to turn Caillet in one direction while he himself acted in another, in order to possess himself of an advantage which he felt sure would enable him to rule the leader at his will.

He had prepared all for his purpose before he sat down beside that fire; and by subtle insinuations to several of the persons present, he had prompted that proposal which was certain to lead the forces of the insurgents in the direction that he desired, if Caillet still remained ignorant of facts with which he himself had accidentally become acquainted. He had so schemed, also, that if Caillet resisted he was likely to meet with opposition for the first time, and perhaps to have his determination overruled by all the leaders present.

The proposal of which we have spoken had been delayed, and the feast and the revel protracted somewhat longer than the old man liked; and at length, looking towards the captain of the freebooters we have mentioned, a man of great corporal powers and no slight talents, he said aloud, after an unnoticed sign for the other to begin, "Well, my friends, we had better settle our proceedings for to-morrow before we are all quite drunk."

Caillet remained silent; and the freebooter, then remembering the suggestions that had been made to him by Thibalt, exclaimed, "Of course we shall now go to Senlis, as we proposed last week. There is nothing to stop us now: the town is open and full of wealth; we shall get immense booty and destroy a whole nest of the viper nobility."

Caillet gazed at him with a stern smile as he spoke; but before he could answer, several of the others around exclaimed, "Oh, yes; to Senlis!—to Senlis let us go: we shall never get such plunder as that."

The leader frowned, and replied sternly, "We go first to Ermenonville. That castle taken, I lead you to Senlis; but we must not leave it behind us, with its garrison ready to attack us in the rear."

"Send old Thibalt with ten thousand men to blockade it," cried the freebooter, who had been well tutored: "there are not fifty men in the place; but before we have captured it the dauphin's troops may be in Senlis, and we lose the best thing that has offered itself since the beginning."

Thibalt cast a rapid glance towards Caillet to see how he relished the proposal; but the latter replied, fixing his eyes sternly upon the freebooter, "I do not change my purposes. What I have said is determined. We take Ermenonville, and then attack Senlis; and should the dauphin's troops be in it, if there be no cowards amongst ourselves we will burn them and Senlis together."

"Nay," cried the freebooter boldly, while several voices murmured something about proceeding to Senlis at once, "I see not why one man's voice should overthrow all our counsels. Let us put it to the vote here whether we shall go first to Senlis or Ermenonville. You are a brave, strong man, William Caillet, and a good leader to boot; but not a bit braver, or stronger, or wiser, than I or any one else here present."

"If I am not," answered Caillet, rising coldly and slowly from the ground, "I am not fit to overrule your opinion, which I will do, or die. We will have no disputes or factions amongst us. There is one way, when any two leaders differ, of settling the matter at once, without spreading the quarrel throughout the whole. Stand up, man, I say! stand up and draw your sword! No words, my friends, but make a space around. He has said that I am not braver, or stronger, or wiser than he is: I say that I am all! Now let him try. Stand back, I say! those that know me will not meddle. Are you a coward?" he added, seeing that the freebooter hesitated.

His opponent's weapon instantly flashed in the air, and was aimed at Caillet's naked head, with a sudden straightforward stroke which seemed destined to cleave him to the ground; but it was parried in a moment; and ere he could recover his guard, the sweeping blade of the insurgent leader struck him

on the neck beneath the left ear, and laid him a headless trunk upon the earth, as if he had been smitten with a scythe. The dark blood spouted forth and deluged the grass; and Caillet, wiping his blade upon a handful of leaves, replaced it in the sheath, saying, "A body of our men are already before Ermenonville; we will take it ere two suns have risen and set, and then I promise I will lead to Senlis."

"When you have possessed yourself of fair Adela de Mauvinet," added Thibalt la Rue, with a sweet smile and in a low tone; "but what is to be done with this piece of flesh that lies quivering here? I fear it will be difficult to fit the head upon the body again; and if those he brought with him see them thus disjoined, they may very likely quit us or breed a tumult."

"If they seek to quit us, let them go," replied Caillet; "we can well spare them. If they breed a tumult, there are plenty of trees to hang them to, nor will ropes be wanting, nor hands willing to do it. As for the rest, let his body be taken away and buried. The matter is sufficient as it is to serve for a good warning, my friend Thibalt, both to those who listen to evil counsels and those who give them."

It was early on the following morning when the immense multitude of the insurgents surrounded the Castle of Ermenonville; and, though the place was strong and well defended, yet before night terrible progress had been made towards its destruction. The walls were undermined in various places, and two or three more hours of light would have seen many a yawning breach in the defences.

Just about the time that the sun was setting, old Thibalt la Rue was seen speaking eagerly with four of the peasants, who had been carrying forward the attack on the side where he himself commanded.

"But I tell you," he said, in answer to some objection which one of them had seemed to make—"but I tell you, that as soon as he has got possession of this girl, he will have all that he has ever desired, and then he will marry her, get a promise of pardon and distinction for himself, quit us and leave us to our fate: nay, perhaps be the first to head the troops against us. No, no; we must enable her to make her escape, or else get hold of her ourselves, which would be better still; for then we could rule him as we liked."

"But how can we do it? how can we do it?" asked the peasant to whom he was speaking. "The old lord is too cunning to believe anything you can write to him."

"I don't know that," replied Thibalt; "and besides, there

are four or five of the men from St. Ieu who were vassals of the old lord's, and they go to this business with an unwilling heart, for they love him much. If you will consent and help me, I will speak with them as soon as the sun is down. We can get them, I dare say, to be hostages."

"But how can we get hold of the girl, then?" demanded the peasant.

"By a sudden attack laid in ambush," replied Thibalt. "You shall command it, and can easily hide two or three hundred men in the brushwood on the skirts of the forest. It will all be easily managed: make his own people persuade the old lord to try an escape during the night, they becoming pledges for his safety. Do not set upon him till he is beyond our farthest posts: by that time the hostages will be free; so that if these men of Mauvinet require any sureties themselves, I can give myself up for one, and be at liberty before you make your attack. But mind, on your life and honour, you do no harm to the girl, otherwise we entirely lose our hold upon Caillet."

"I will take care of that," answered the other, "I will take care of that; but now, Master Thibalt, if I bring her safe to you, you shall ransom her from me, for it is for you I am working—that is clear enough."

"I will give you a hundred pieces of gold," said Thibalt.

"If you do not make it five hundred," replied the man, "I will take her up to Caillet, or keep her myself to be my own paramour."

Even villains find that a state of society in which all principle is at an end is very inconvenient to live in; and old Thibalt himself, who had never conceived any moral tie binding, now longed for some such bond wherewith to secure his own instruments. He was obliged, however, to deal with things as he found them; and after settling the affair as far as possible with those to whom he had first communicated his views, he prowled about till the sun was down, and then gathered together five or six of the men of Mauvinet, with whom he held a long and eager conversation. At length he procured a light and a piece of parchment, and sending for a cunning scribe over whom he had gained some power, he caused him to write hastily the following lines:—

LORD OF MAUVINET.—These are written to you by a friend. The Castle of Ermenenville cannot be held out. If you are the man that we believe, you are already thinking of cutting your way through, and selling your life dearly. However, as you were always a kind lord and a good master, your friends in the

camp of the free people of France have determined to give you an opportunity of escaping, if you choose to take advantage of it. In the quarter opposite to the western postern you will find a path open for you; and you may rest perfectly certain that you will be safe for the distance of two miles. But to render you more secure, as you may well entertain a doubt of the word pledged to you, you will find three hostages, unarmed, within five yards of the door. Then you will take with you for a mile on your way, and then set them free. But as you value your own life, and the lives of those who risk all to save you, you must be as still as death, while you and yours go through the midst of the camp. Not a word must be spoken, and you must pass along slowly, lest the noise of your horses, or the jingling of your harness, should rouse others than those who seek your good. The hour is midnight.

As soon as this was written, it was tied to the head of an arrow, round the shaft of which was wrapped some tow. This material was then lighted, and the whole was shot into the castle. For several hours after, the ordinary scenes took place amongst the insurgents, but gradually about ten o'clock all noises ceased, and weariness laid the strong limbs at rest. Little guard or watch of any kind was kept amongst them, for their numbers were so immense that they imagined they had no cause for fear. To all appearance the only persons that were awake amongst the whole vast multitude were William Caillet and Thibalt la Rue, who sat close together, talking eagerly in their usual strain. The old man seemed anxious rather than otherwise to keep his companion's eyes from sleep, laying out schemes and plans for the future, and inquiring into the tidings which Caillet had received from various parts of France.

At length, however, Caillet exclaimed, "Get you gone, Thibalt! get you gone! I must sleep. For three nights I have not closed my eyes. But now I have them in my grasp! nothing can snatch them from me now; and I may as well have a few hours' slumber."

Old Thibalt suppressed the bitter smile that was rising to his lip, and merely adding in a taunting tone, "I thought you never slept, Caillet," he left him, returning to his own part of their leaguer, where he instantly sought out the men he had been conversing with at nightfall.

"I am come, you see," he said, "to place myself in your hands. Where are the three men who are to be hostages?"

"They are gone forward already," replied one of the peasants. "Let us draw back, Master Thibalt, into this hollow, and watch what follows."

Thibalt accompanied them in silence; and then seating themselves in a little hollow of the ground, the party gazed eagerly

for some minutes over the slope towards the castle. The night was very dark; and though one could see the sombre masses of towers and walls marked by a deeper blackness upon the sky behind, nothing else was visible. All was silent too; but after a time the keen ears of the old man caught a sound, and raising himself upon his knees, he soon saw a number of dark objects, which might be men and horses, moving slowly and silently forward. They passed on with a low rustling, and were soon lost to his sight. Thibalt and his companions listened eagerly for several minutes, but at length, as all remained still, he turned and said, "You see I have dealt fairly with you."

In less than half-an-hour, the three men who had been given as hostages came back; and Thibalt, without waiting to hear their account of what had taken place, exclaimed, "All is now safe, so I will retire to rest:" and he hurried away to a hut in which he had taken up his abode.

It was situated near the edge of the camp, and the old man was some time in reaching it; but even when he had entered and closed the door, far from seeking repose, he listened with his head inclined and his ear turned to the window, till suddenly he heard a distant sound of shouts and clashing of arms as of men in strife. Others heard it also and rushed forth: the whole camp was soon roused, and everything was noise and confusion. But in the midst of all, the leader of the peasants whom he had cunningly placed in ambush was brought into his hut, wounded and bleeding.

"Curse upon them and you!" he exclaimed as soon as he saw Thibalt. "They have escaped, and have half killed me."

The old man tried to give him consolation; but the dying Jacques rolled his eyes wildly round, saying to one of his companions, who had helped him thither, "Fetch me Caillet. I would fain speak to William Caillet."

"Go, go!" cried Thibalt in a sweet tone; "fetch him Caillet, as he wants to speak to him."

The man retired, leaving his comrade alone with the old serpent who had employed him; and in less than ten minutes Caillet was in the hut.

"Alas! you are too late," said Thibalt as he saw him—"the poor fellow is dead. They have broken through, Caillet, you have heard, and killed poor Merlache, here. What he had to say, I know not, but he wanted much to speak with you."

Caillet uttered not a word, but turned upon his heel.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE only article of furniture that was to be found in the prison to which Albert Denyn had been consigned was a small three-legged stool. As the young soldier looked round at the bare walls, the small grated window some two or three feet above his head, the damp earthen floor, and the strong iron-plaited door covered with dull and dropping mould, he could not but feel a sort of heavy and cheerless cloud come over his brighter hopes, and make the prospect before him look more dark and gloomy than it really was. A moment after, however, the buoyant heart of youth rose up again, and he murmured to himself with a smile, "This is certainly a strange turn of fate!"

He had still to undergo that which is more difficult to endure without despondency than any sudden misfortune or disappointment; namely, the weary passing of hours in solitude and idleness. At first he consoled himself with the thought that the prévôt would certainly not fail to keep his promise, and set him and the rest of the prisoners at liberty as soon as he could do so without danger. The King of Navarre, he fancied, also, out of respect for the Captal de Buch, would not suffer his imprisonment to be long.

Nevertheless, as hour after hour went by, and not a soul entered the prison either to bring him provisions or exchange a word with him, his spirits sank, and he felt a degree of melancholy creep over him of which he was ashamed, and with which he struggled without being able to overcome it.

The light which the chamber possessed was but little, even in the brightest part of the day; but now that light began to decrease, and at length the young soldier saw the last ray fade away, and all was darkness. He continued to walk up and down the room, however, giving way to all the sad thoughts which were naturally suggested, not only by his ~~own~~ situation, but by the state of France and the dangers which surrounded those who were most dear to him. The wing of Time flew on, with nothing to relieve the monotony of its

passing except the noises which he heard occasionally proceeding either from other parts of the prison, or from the busy world without, the tie between him and which seemed now entirely dissevered.

During the early part of the night the sound of tongues reached him, talking loudly in some of the neighbouring chambers; and once he heard a gay voice singing in the English tongue, showing that either the other prisoners did not share his despondency, or else were better provided with means of lightening the load of imprisonment. Then again the plashing sound of oars, and the rushing of a boat through the water immediately beneath the tower, struck his ear; and gay tongues and a merry laugh from a distance—probably from the other side of the river—served more to increase his melancholy, by contrasting harshly with his own feelings, than to enliven him by showing that there was still joy and cheerfulness in the world. As time went on, however, all these sounds ceased, and silence resumed its dominion over the gay metropolis of France.

To the best of Albert Denyn's judgment, midnight was past by more than one hour when he again heard the noise of oars, and a boat seemed to stop beneath the walls of the tower itself. The next moment, three sharp blows, as if struck by some heavy substance against a wooden door, reached the ear of the young prisoner; and after an interval of silence, which lasted perhaps four or five minutes, the blows were repeated, and a voice exclaimed, "Mathieu, Mathieu! open and let me in!"

For a short time no other sound was heard, but then a heavy foot sounded upon the stairs, the great gate creaked upon its hinges, and the murmur of two persons speaking low made itself faintly heard through the door of his prison. An instant after, that door itself opened and a bright light flashed in, dazzling Albert Denyn's eyes so that he could not at first see who it was that approached. It was the voice of the Pré-vôt Marcel, however, that exclaimed, as he turned sharply to the keeper of the tower who was behind him, "How is this, Mathieu? You have left him without bed, or light, or food, apparently!"

"You never told me to give him these," replied the jailer: "you said to keep him alone——"

"But not to starve him," cried the prévôt. "However, quick! bring him some food and wine. They have treated you ill, my young friend, but I have not forgotten my promise."

Certainly, five minutes before, Albert Denyn would have

thought a jest the most unpalatable thing in the world; but so speedy are the revolutions of feeling in the human heart, that apprehension and despondency vanished at once, and he replied gaily—

"You invited me to supper, Monsieur le Prévôt—I must say you have given me dainty fare."

"Knights-errant," answered the prévôt with a grim smile, "have always been known to feed poorly and sleep on hard beds; and such will ever be the case, my good sir, with those who meddle in affairs with which they have nothing to do."

"But," exclaimed Albert Denyn, "you would not have me stand tamely by and see——"

"Well, well!" exclaimed the prévôt, interrupting him, "we have no time to talk of these things now. Besides, the matter is settled, and there is never any use in returning to a business that is gone. Let the Past have its own. From its sad and dark dominion we can never recover one of all the things that have bowed to its sway, be they the bright and beautiful, be they the stern and terrible, be they good, be they bad. The Past is the only monarch against whose sway there is no appeal, and from whose dread sceptre there is no escaping. The old man and his niece are safe, far beyond the walls of Paris. Your friends here in the prison with you shall be set at liberty before to-morrow morning. But it is with you that I have to speak, and with the Present that we have to deal. You are a Frenchman, are you not?"

"A true one," answered Albert Denyn.

"Then, how came you to be serving with the Captal de Buch?" demanded the prévôt.

"I have only served with him in foreign lands," replied Albert, "and never against my native country. For it I will always draw my sword, and never against it; and that the noble captal knows right well."

"Good—good!" said the prévôt; and after thinking for a moment he added, "I have a task for you, which you must not refuse."

"Tell me more of it, prévôt," rejoined Albert. "I have learned many a lesson of late, and amongst the rest know, that one ought to undertake nothing without comprehending clearly what it is and what it leads to."

"You are right to be cautious," said the prévôt; "but it is a task that you may well be proud to perform."

He paused and mused for several minutes; and then, while the jailer brought in a small table and some food, he spoke of indifferent subjects, or else gazed moodily upon the floor. As

soon as the man was gone, however, he continued, saying, "Fall to and refresh yourself, but keep your ears open. There is a young lady now in this town of Paris—would to God that she had not come hither!—of high rank and station, but of a race who are safer anywhere else than in the French capital. You have heard of the taking of the tower of the Louvre, where we found such a supply of arms and ammunition: she was known to be therein, and the mob sought for her, somewhat eager for bloodshed. I found means to save her from their fury for the time; for, though no way tender-hearted, I love not to see a woman's blood spilled; and besides, it is always well to leave some door open for retreat in case of need. I concealed her then; but these people, these Parisians, the most turbulent and ungovernable race on the face of the earth, know that she is still in the capital, suspect me, and watch every movement that I make. She must be got out of Paris before daybreak to-morrow. I dare send none of my own people to give her protection, and I know no one to apply to but you."

Albert Denyn listened eagerly, and imagination whispered instantly in his ear the name of Adela de Mauvinet. There was no cause, it is true, why he should suppose that the pre-vôt spoke of her. He had merely mentioned a lady of high rank, and there was not any reason whatsoever for believing that Adela was in Paris; but yet a feeling of hope and expectation rose in the breast of the young soldier, which made his heart beat high as he listened. Do you never remark in the midst of some wide-extended plain, while the clouds of an April day were passing over, sweeping forest and field, village and stream, with their faint shadows as they fly, one bright particular spot—some church spire or cottage window—which the light rests on longer and catches more frequently than any other point in the whole scene—a spot which seems to draw to itself every stray sunbeam that visits the landscape, and which shines out the moment that a ray finds its way through the cloud? Such is the object of its love to a young heart. The moment that the light of hope breaks through the darkness of despondency and the clouds of care, the first rays fall naturally upon the predominant object of the heart's affections, making it sparkle with contrasted splendour from the gloom of the scene around.

Without an instant's hesitation Albert Denyn accepted the task, only remarking, "It is unfortunate that you can give me no one to accompany me: a single hand can do but little at times like these."

"I have no one, I have no one!" said the prévôt in an impatient tone. "If I contrive to get her safe from Paris; it will be no slight thing. Your task must be to bring her in safety to Ermenonville or Beaumont."

"Could I not have some of the English with me?" demanded Albert Denyn. "There are several of them I have seen before, and one named Scroope, who stood strongly by me when they had taken me prisoner and were about putting me to death."

"I dare not trust them," replied the prévôt; "I dare not trust them: they are all rank marauders; and if they were to discover the prize they have in their hands, they would cut your throat for the mere ransom, if they could not get you to join and share with them. Yet stay! this fellow Scroope, you may take him with you. Man to man, you will be his match, doubtless, and he must promise to be under your command. Wait a moment or two and finish your supper; I will go and speak with him."

The prévôt quitted the chamber, and Albert Denyn was left for about a quarter of an hour in solitude. At the end of that time, however, Marcel returned with the soldier Scroope, who laughed when he saw the young soldier, saying good-humouredly, "So I am to be under your command, though I have seen more battles than you have seen years! However, I'd be under the command of a baby of six months old, in order to get out of the hole into which they have crammed me, giving me nothing but sour wine and hogs' flesh. But tell me, how came you by this fine coat of arms? When last I saw you there was something not quite so gay about you."

"That is nothing to you, my good friend," replied Albert Denyn: "be you sure that the arms are my own, as well as that medal of the emperor at which you are looking. He put it round my neck with his own hand," the youth added proudly. "But let us not waste time. I am ready, Sir Prévôt."

"Not till I have finished this flagon," cried Scroope: "if you do not drink it, I see no reason why I should not."

The rest of their proceedings in the prison were soon brought to an end. Marcel led the way out, and descending the little sloping muddy path which led to the bank of the river, they found a boat with a solitary boatman, who rose as he perceived the prévôt.

"Quick, Mathurin!" said the prévôt, speaking to the person in the skiff; "you I can trust. Run back with this key;

bring out another horse, a *destrier*, to the place whither I sent the boy with the others. If they seek to stop you at the gate, show them your badge: we will row ourselves to the place."

The man sprang to the shore; Albert Denyn, the *prévôt*, and Scroope entered the boat; and the Englishman, seizing the oars of his own free-will, rowed rapidly on, under the direction of Marcel, to a spot on the other bank of the river.

As near as possible to the point where the houses of the village of Passy approach the river in the present day, but which then formed part of a green field, bordered by a vineyard and embellished with several groups of tall trees, appeared in the clear moonlight a dark mass standing under one of the elms. It might have been composed of bushes for aught that the eye could really discern, but the imagination of Albert Denyn instantly aided him to arrange it as a group of men and horses. In this instance, imagination was right to a certain degree: the horses were there; one tied to the tree itself, and another held by a page covered with a large riding-mantle. No other human beings, however, were there; and Albert Denyn, who sprang to the ground before the *prévôt*, looked around in vain for the lady.

Marcel spoke a few words to the page in a low voice; and shortly after was heard the sound of another horse's feet coming rapidly. The noise was soon found to proceed, however, from the approach of the man named Mathurin, leading a charger provided with a strong steel saddle and head-piece.

"Now mount quickly," said the *prévôt*; "and God speed you!"

"But where is the lady?" demanded Albert Denyn.

"You will find her by the way," replied the *prévôt*.

"I am to ride her horse and enact the lady till you do," cried the page, springing upon the light jennet which he had hitherto held: "I can show you the road if you do not know it."

"Oh! we all know the way right well," replied the man named Scroope; "you saucy pages think that no one but yourselves is acquainted with anything."

Thus saying, he mounted the beast provided for him; and taking leave of Marcel, with one or two words of instruction from the *prévôt* as to what places they were to avoid and what places to seek, the little party set out upon its journey.

CHAPTER XXXV.

ALBERT DENYN, the page, and the stout yeoman Scroope, rode on for about an hour almost in silence. The two former were certainly occupied with thoughts of their own; the latter was troubled with very few thoughts of any kind; but, unlike some persons whose mind is lightly loaded, his tongue was not the more active on that account. He was the perfect soldier of that day, though a favourable specimen of the animal, for his heart was good, and his judgment not bad; and when called upon to act, he did so in a manner very creditable to himself; but until the moment for action came, he went on without the slightest inquiry regarding what was to happen next, and in utter carelessness of everything that was taking place around him. He was exactly one of those, so well depicted by Dryden, who "whistle as they go for want of thought;" and indeed in the present instance he practised the same musical idleness, whistling a light air, till Albert put him in mind that he might call attention to their party, which was not at all to be desired.

During the hour that we have mentioned, the thoughts of Albert Denyn were stirred up by expectation, and he looked anxiously forward every moment in the hope of seeing the person whom he was destined to escort. At the end of that time, however, the moon touched the edge of the sky; and although morning was near, the sun as yet gave no light. There seemed every chance of passing the lady in the darkness; and Albert Denyn could refrain no longer, but turning to the page he said, "Surely we cannot have missed the lady?"

"Do not fear, do not fear!" replied the boy, laughing; "all will go right, I dare say."

"But I do not choose to trust to daresays," rejoined the young soldier, not particularly well pleased with the tone of the page's answer. "Have you good reason to think that we are on the track to find her? The prévôt told me that it would be with the greatest difficulty that he got her out of

Paris; and if he brought her as far as this, he might send her with equal safety to Beaumont."

"Doubtless," said the boy in the same tone; "but she may be nearer to us than we think. Do you not understand yet, young man?"

"Perhaps I do," replied Albert Denyn; but at the same time his expectations grew cold, for the voice that spoke to him was certainly not that of Adela de Mauvinet.

The party relapsed into silence again; and in about half-an-hour the eastern sky grew grey and then yellow, and dawn and light succeeded to darkness. Albert Denyn turned a closer glance upon the countenance of his young companion, and saw beneath the page's hood the soft features and fair skin of a very beautiful girl, of about two or three and twenty years of age; but that girl was not Adela de Mauvinet. Tenderness and courtesy towards woman, however, was a part of the young soldier's code; and after riding on by the lady's side for some way, he said, "Are you not likely to be much fatigued?"

"Oh, no," she replied; "I have been used lately to a harder life than I ever thought to know. But at all events it were better to die of weariness than to be torn to pieces by the mad mob of Paris."

"But what can you have done," asked Albert Denyn, "to offend the people? I thought that the good Parisians were softened in a moment by youth and beauty."

"You have heard the same story," answered the lady, "of the effect produced by an innocent maiden upon a lion. I should not like to be the virgin to try, however, and much less to trust the tiger of Paris—I mean the mob of the capital—with no other arms than youth, beauty, and innocence. Why, without shame or remorse they would cut off Diana's ears, and hang up Venus to the first spout they could find."

She spoke laughing, but with some degree of bitterness, and similar to the specimen we have given was her conversation as they proceeded. In despite of all that she had gone through, she was still light, gay, and somewhat coquettish withal; by no means without a due sense of her own beauty and wit, and of the united effect of both upon her companions. Nor is it to be denied that, as he rode on hour after hour by the side of this fair being, Albert Denyn felt no slight degree of interest and admiration; but still she was not to him, nor ever could be, Adela de Mauvinet.

We must not pause upon all the little adventures that took place by the way, nor tell all the little acts of kindness and

attention which Albert paid to his fair charge; nor must we detail how she assuredly tried to pique his admiration to the highest point, and felt somewhat pettish and disappointed on finding that, though full of chivalrous courtesy and attention, there was none of that fiery and eager admiration about him which is in general so easily excited in the breast of the young.

All passed in safety. Here and there, indeed, the travellers heard of parties of free companions; and as they proceeded farther from Paris, sad tales of the ravages of the Jacquerie met their ears. Once, indeed, they were induced to turn several miles out of the direct road, so that Ermenonville was still at some distance when day began to decline; but no troop either of the adventurers or of the insurgent peasants presented themselves; and the lady continued to make light of the revolt, and to declare that all the Jacques in the world could not be so bad as the citizens of Paris.

• Even her tone, however, was changed, when, pausing at a small village where they proposed to pass the night, she saw the smoking ruins of a tall castle on the neighbouring hill, and heard that it had been burned to the ground three days before by the peasantry of Brie.

A hurried consultation was held early on the following morning, between the lady and Albert Denyn; for it can hardly be said that Scroope took any part therein, ready to follow wherever any one else preceded him, but neither willing, nor indeed able to lead. The first point to be considered was, in what direction their steps should be turned; for some rumours had reached them during the preceding evening of a large body of insurgents barring the way towards Ermenonville; but the lady pressed eagerly that they should at least make the attempt in that quarter.

"I have faithful friends," she said, "in the castle itself; and if I could once reach them I should feel safe."

"We will try," replied Albert Denyn; "we will try. But if we find ourselves shut out from Ermenonville, it is to Beaumont, is it not, that we must direct our steps?"

The lady assented, and they rode on with the first light of the day in the direction which had been fixed upon.

They had proceeded about six miles, when towards seven o'clock in the morning, the sun, which was still low down in the sky, appeared to pour all his rays upon one spot in the landscape, at the distance of about a mile from them, as they ~~passed~~ ^{passed} across the brow of a hill which looked over the country far and wide around. The light flashed brightly back from

that point to the eyes of the little party, as if reflected from some bright substance; and the lady, drawing in her horse's rein, exclaimed, "What is that? what is that? Those must be armed men."

"I think it is so," replied Albert Denyn; "and by seeing no surcoat amongst them I should judge that they are the rebel Jacques. Wait here with this soldier, lady, and I will go on and ascertain."

Although his fair companion eagerly besought him to stay with her himself and send the man Scroope forward to reconnoitre, Albert Denyn would not trust that task to his somewhat duller intellects, and rode on, winding amongst the lanes and high banks, in order to get as near as possible to the party he had seen, without being observed.

At length, at a spot where he could just raise his head above the bank, he obtained a full view into the meadow, where some thirty or forty men-at-arms were collected; and the scene presented to his eyes was one of no slight interest. The distance was too great for him to distinguish the faces; but he was soon satisfied that the persons there collected did not belong to the Jacquerie. In one part a group was gathered together, eating what seemed a hasty meal; in another, a strong man with his corselets stripped off was holding out his naked arm, while a woman, on her knees beside him, twined a long bandage round what seemed a severe wound. Under some trees appeared three or four ladies and two men, with a page apparently helping them to wine; while at a little distance under a bank were collected the horses of the party, with a boy watching them.

Satisfied with what he had seen, but yet judging that it was more prudent, circumstanced as he was, to avoid all communication with strangers, Albert Denyn rode back, and met his fair companion, whose impatient spirit would not suffer her to remain where he left her, coming down by the road which he had followed.

"Well, what are they? what are they, ungallant squire?" she cried. "If you leave ladies entrusted to your care in that manner, you will get no fair hands to buckle on your knightly spurs. What are these men?"

"They seem of gentle blood, lady," replied Albert, "and have women with them; but nevertheless I think we had better pass on our way without venturing to speak with them. They may be some of the English bands, and as bad as the Jacquerie."

"Worse, perhaps," said Scroope, bluntly: "were they to

meet with a pretty lady dressed as a boy, I would not answer for any of our brave fellows not thinking her fair game."

"Hush, sir!" cried the lady, turning upon him with an air of dignity and sternness, very different from the coquettish manner which she had assumed towards Albert Denyn: "hush, sir! you do not know of whom you speak."

"By the Lord! it matters very little," replied the man with a tone of indifference: "a good English rider would not stop to ask who or what you are, so that he found you in that dress and in these fields. Nevertheless, do not be offended or afraid: I will do my best to befriend and protect you, as I have promised; but I think with my good companion that we had better keep out of the way of superior numbers."

By this time they had reached the spot from which Albert Denyn had reconnoitred the party; and a little farther on the bank sloped down still more, so that the lady herself was enabled to see over into the meadow. That little germ of curiosity which is at the bottom of every heart, both male and female, and mingles itself with more things than we think of, would not suffer her to let the opportunity pass unemployèd; and, drawing in her rein, she gazed out over the field, where the party we have spoken of was by this time in the act of gathering together their equipments, and mounting their horses for the purpose of departure.

"I cannot but think," exclaimed the lady, "that those must be French arms I see yonder."

"You had better ride on, lady," said Albert Denyn: "they will see our heads above the bank, and worse may come."

"See, see!" said the lady, without attending to what her companion said—"see! they are raising a banner there. Whose arms are those?"

"Mauvinet! Mauvinet!" cried Albert Denyn, clasping his hands with joy: "good friends to the crown of France, lady! The Seneschal of Touraine! Let us haste to meet them: they must cross by the gap we have just passed;" and without more ado he turned his horse and galloped back, scarcely remarking whether the lady followed him or not.

In a minute he had reached the break in the bank which led into the fields; and spurring his charger through, he dashed forward at full speed to meet the party, which was now coming slowly on, four or five abreast, with the good Lord of Mauvinet and several other gentlemen in the front, forming a guard on either side of a fair female form, the sight of which made the stout heart of Albert Denyn flutter like that of a timid girl.

• On the other hand, the sudden appearance of a horseman covered with a surcoat of arms unknown to any one present, followed at some little distance by what seemed a page and another man-at-arms, created some surprise, and, as it happened, apprehension, amongst the party of the Lord of Mauvinet.

“Halt!” cried the count, as soon as he saw him approaching. “Whom have we here? Some fresh bad tidings, I fear. Whose are those bearings on his coat? Argent a bend dexter azure. Those are not French arms, I think. Why turn you so pale, my Adela? Fear not, fear not; we can defend you still, dear girl. But surely I know that youth! Albert Denyn, as I live! Welcome, welcome, my dear boy!” and the old nobleman held out his arms to his young retainer as if he had been a son.

Albert Denyn sprang to the ground and eagerly kissed the good lord’s hand, and then, turning a look full of emotion to the other side, he saw the sweet eyes of Adela de Mauvinet, filled with tears, bent down towards the saddle-bow, while the quivering of her lip told to him, and perhaps to others, what a struggle there was in her breast to prevent the words of joy from breaking forth.

A few minutes of silence followed on all sides, and then some sentences of explanation succeeded; but ere Albert Denyn could say one-half of that which he had to tell, the eyes of the old Lord of Mauvinet had lighted on the lady in a page’s habit, who was now approaching near; and after passing his hand twice across his sight, as if to clear it from some illusion, he cast his rein to an attendant, sprang to the ground, and advancing towards the fair rider with a lowly inclination, pressed his lips upon her hand. This act, as may be supposed, created some small bustle and surprise in his own troop; and under favour thereof Adela bent down her head to speak to the companion of her childhood, first saying aloud, “Who is that, Albert?” and then adding, in a low voice, “Thank God! thank God, you have come back to us! Ay, and with this, too,” she added, laying her finger lightly for a single instant on his coat of arms. “Well won has it been, I am sure, dear Albert, and ever will be nobly borne. But who is this my father is bringing up?”

“In truth I do not know, dear lady,” replied Albert: “she is a high-bred and somewhat high-mannered lady, who was put under my charge to conduct in safety from Paris, where her life was in danger, to Ermenonville.”

• He had not time to say any more, when the Lord of Mau-

vinet, leading the lady's horse by the bridle, approached, saying, "Dismount, my Adela, and pay due reverence to the Duchess of Orleans."

The surprise of Albert Denyn was not less than that of those around him; but after the little bustle occasioned by the meeting was over, a short consultation was held; and on hearing that the duchess was wending her way to Ermenonville, the Lord of Mauvinet shook his head mournfully, saying, "Ermenonville is but a name, madam. Two days ago we ourselves, in all but thirty fighting men, strove to hold out the place against eight thousand Jacques. Finding it in vain, we made our way through them in the night, not without some loss and some wounds, leaving behind us at Clari on the hill two men to watch the proceedings of the villains, and to bring us tidings. From them we find that ere the sun had risen three hours, on the day we left it, not a stone was left standing of Ermenonville. We were even now bending our steps towards Beaumont on the Oise, thinking, madam, that you were there. We know, however, that there is a strong body of men in the place, and we may well expect aid from Paris or from Montereau."

"From Montereau, perhaps," replied the duchess; "but from Paris none. However, let us onward, my good lord, for it seems that danger lies upon the path that we were following. At Beaumont we shall find some repose, and can hold counsel farther."

As the lady spoke, she took her place between the Lord of Mauvinet and his daughter, making a sign to Albert Denyn to occupy a place behind her, and saying aloud, "Follow me, my young friend; you shall still be my squire, so keep close to your lady. I owe that good youth much, my Lord of Mauvinet, though whether from some secret knowledge of my name and station, or because he is somewhat young in ladies' company, he has been as cold and shy as a new captain of the guard."

The Lord of Mauvinet replied something in a light tone; but Adela turned her eyes to the young soldier's countenance, with a smile which seemed to say, that she knew better than the gay duchess the causes of his coldness and his shyness.

The party proceeded, and after a somewhat fatiguing march they came in sight of the tall towers and heavy walls of the castle of Beaumont on the Oise, and rode gladly up the ascent in hopes of repose and safety.

One after another, the cavalcade entered through the heavy arches of the gate tower; but ere Albert Denyn followed

their example, he turned for a moment to gaze around him, and to examine the features of the country in which he was about to pause for the night, as had become habitual with him during the wandering life which he had lately led under the banner of the Capta! de Buch.

The spring sun was shining over a sparkling scene, casting long shadows here and there, from wood, and village, and rising ground; so that, though the scene was fair to look upon, it was difficult for any unpractised eye to judge exactly of the various objects which the prospect might contain. At two points of the plain of Chambly, however, Albert Denyn saw some sombre masses of considerable extent, which puzzled him not a little. They were darker than the mere shadows cast by the copses, yet they did not seem to be sufficiently raised from the surface of the country to be either woods or hamlets. Albert continued to gaze, for the purpose of seeing if they were stationary, but they neither advanced nor receded; and he then cast his eyes upon the ground, and remained musing somewhat gloomily for a moment or two. Suddenly, however, a hand was laid upon his arm, and the friendly voice of the Lord of Mauvinet said, "How now, Albert? why are you tarrying here, when there are friends within who are anxious to hear all that has happened to you? and why look you so sad, when, from all that I have heard and all that I see, there is no man in all France should have a gladder heart than you?"

"My noble lord," replied Albert, willing to avoid the real subject of his thoughts, "I cannot think how any one in France can have a cheerful heart and see her in such a state as she now is; but if you would know what I have been watching, look there at those two dark spots some five miles off."

"What are they?" said the Lord of Mauvinet: "your young eyes are better than mine, Albert. I do not see them move: they seem to me like the young plantations made by the last king."

"If they be young plantations, my lord," replied Albert, "there are men in them. They do not advance, it is true; but if you will look steadfastly, you will see the edges change their shape from time to time, like the outskirts of a great crowd of people collected in one spot for the night."

"The Jacques for my life, then!" cried the old lord: "we must have them well watched, Albert: ay, and by some of our own people too; for I find these fellows in the castle here had thoughts of abandoning it before we came up, and I do

not believe they are much to be trusted. I will set Pierrot to look out from the highest tower. But you come in with us; the duchess asks for you, and you must tell us all your adventures."

"Nay, nay, my lord," answered the youth; "my adventures are little worth hearing, and in truth I cannot speak of them before a crowd who care nought for me and know nought of me."

"Nonsense! nonsense!" cried the old lord; "there is no crowd there: the knights and the men-at-arms are all in the hall, the duchess sups in her own bower, with none but myself and Adela, and one whom you must love and like, the young Lord Louis de Chamblé. He saved my life at Ermenonville, and is very dear to me. The duchess asks for your presence, too, and you must obey."

"But," replied Albert Denyn, "perhaps she does not know ——"

"Yes, yes, she does know," said the old nobleman; "she knows more than I did till she herself told me: that it was the emperor himself who gave you that chain and surcoat. So come, my good youth, without further words."

Thus speaking, the count turned into the castle again, and Albert Denyn followed to the presence of the Duchess of Orleans.

The page's garb was now thrown aside, the princess had resumed her own attire, and with it her manner had become more dignified and calm, though not without a spice of gay coquetry from time to time, which sat not ill upon her pretty features. She welcomed the young soldier graciously enough; but after the first formal compliment to herself, the eyes of Albert Denyn instantly turned to the only other male person present, the Lord of Mauvinet having left the room for an instant, in order to give directions for watching the castle walls during the night. By the side of the duchess was seated the young nobleman of whom the count had spoken. He was handsome and prepossessing in look, distinguished in demeanour, and with every external sign of one as likely to win a lady's heart as to gain the approbation of those on whose decision her hand depended.

Albert Denyn owned that there was nothing that he could find fault with in the whole appearance of the young Lord of Chamblé, unless indeed it were the slightest possible tinge of superciliousness in his manner towards himself; but yet he hated him not, and felt towards him all that eager jealousy which can exist so well in love without hope.

The Count de Mauvinet soon returned; and, although he little doubted that the dark masses which they had seen were, as Albert Denyn suspected, the revolted serfs, pausing only for the night in their advance to attack the very castle where he was, yet so hardened was the mind of the veteran soldier to danger, that he seemed to cast all thought of it from him, enjoyed to the full the period of refreshment and rest afforded to him, and laughed gaily over the joyous board, even while the hard hand of peril was knocking at the gates.

Notwithstanding all Albert Denyn's unwillingness, the good old lord pressed him almost in a tone of command to relate all that had befallen him in foreign countries. Adela's sweet eyes brightened at the very thought, and the Duchess of Orleans herself added her voice, which of course was not to be refused. We must not pause upon Albert's history. He told it as one who, having great deeds to recount, was fearful, even in seeming, to overrate his own merit. He referred, then, not to himself so much as to the Captal de Buch. It was thus acted the captal here, so spoke the captal there; here were the pagans defeated, there a body of the Teutonic knights were saved.

Those who knew him well understood the whole matter; and even the Duchess of Orleans, with a woman's tact, comprehended that he might have spoken more of himself if he had so willed; while Adela, with her colour varying every moment, gazed down upon the ground, and the good old Lord of Mauvinet forced him by questions to relate a great part of that which he had withheld.

The keen eyes of the Duchess of Orleans, too, were not long in discovering more of the secrets of Albert's heart than he fancied that either word, or look, or tone displayed; and she marked, not without a certain degree of playful malice, that no very kindly glances passed between the young soldier and the gay Lord of Chamblé. It might come across her mind, too—for she had many of those little faults which chequer the brighter parts of woman's character—to give some brief pain to the heart of poor Adela de Mauvinet by coquetting with him who, she saw, was not a little loved; but better thoughts soon came, and more generous feelings whispered, "This youth served and protected me, not knowing who I was, and I will reward him in the way he will best like."

"Come hither, Albert Denyn," she said, after supper was over, as she sat in a somewhat queenly state, with the rest of the party ranged around—"I owe you some recompense for

my safe escort hither, and you shall have this string of pearls to match your golden chain. Kneel, good youth, and I will put it on. The first time you carry this through a body of the Jacques, I will ask knighthood for you at the dauphin's own hand."

"It shall not be long, lady," replied Albert Denyn, while the duchess hung the pearls to the chain given him by the emperor; but the duchess at the same time bent down her head, saying, in a low tone, "Now mark if I do not reward you better still; so do not let idle jealousy lose you opportunity, while I sport with a fool's vanity."

No one but Albert heard the words which she uttered; and he rose and went back to his place, scarcely comprehending their meaning himself. In a few minutes, however, he saw the duchess call the attention of the Lord of Chamblé; and during the whole of the evening, ere she retired to rest, she left no fascination of tone, look, or manner untried upon the young knight to withdraw him from Adela de Mauvinet and attach him to herself. She had not so easy a task as she had expected, however: "Louis de Chamblé was not so weak as she had imagined; and the beauty of Adela was so far superior to her own, that the vague charm of her rank was not sufficient to counterbalance the exceeding loveliness of the old seneschal's daughter. The result was, that the princess became somewhat piqued at her own want of success, and then presuming on her station, she exacted but more severely those attentions which she saw were burdensome.

Thus from time to time Albert Denyn had an opportunity of saying much to her he loved. On the subject of his attachment, indeed, he did not speak; but all he saw in the demeanour of Adela herself was sufficient to tell him that, as far as her affections went, he had no cause of jealousy in regard to the young Lord of Chamblé.

Thus passed the first evening in the Castle of Beaumont-sur-Oise; and when the duchess rose to seek repose, which was not till a late hour of the night, she laid her hand upon that of Adela, saying, "You shall lie in my chamber, sweet lady. Fare you well, knights and gentlemen, and good dreams sit on your pillows!"

"Albert, come with me," said the old Lord of Mauvinet: "you shall tell me something more of yourself ere I sleep. Good night, my Lord of Chamblé: we will talk further on the subject of which you spoke to me this morning, when we see what to-morrow brings forth. All I can reply at present is, you have my best wishes."

The Lord of Chamblé remained alone in the room after the others left it ; and if one might judge by the frown upon his brow, the subject of his meditations was not very pleasant.

At length, however, he started from his fit of thought and retired to his own chamber ; but it was not to sleep, for there were those passions in his heart that are the bitterest foes to slumber.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

"He will have his best wishes!" muttered Albert Denyn to himself, meditating on what the Lord of Mauvinet had said, while, about an hour after the duchess had retired, he wandered round the dark battlements of Beaumont. All that those few words might imply, all that they might produce, came up before the mind of the young soldier, saddening his heart and once more drowning out every spark of hope, if indeed he can be said to have entertained any.

"I am a fool!" he continued: "I dream of things that can never be, and then my heart is wrung to awake and find that I have been dreaming. But, hark! What is that sound? Some people speaking in the court beneath. I thought that all but the guards upon the walls were sound asleep."

The words that were uttered below rose up to him as he stood above, and he heard one man say to another, "Do not let us wait for them any longer. Go in, I say, and down the steps; we cannot lose our way, and they must come after if they will."

"But are you sure that we can get out at the other end?" demanded another voice. "Is there no door to keep us in?"

"None," answered the first; "none, I tell you. It opens out amongst the furze bushes two hundred yards beyond the moat. Hark! I hear the rest coming."

"Men deserting from the castle!" said Albert to himself. "I must go and awake the Lord of Mauvinet; though it is better, indeed, that the cowards should be away than remain here to cast ice upon brave men's hearts."

Nevertheless, he turned his steps in haste towards the apartment where he had left the count; but ere he had reached the spot at which a flight of steps descended from the battlements, the young Lord of Chamblé caught himself in his way, saying, "Stay, young man! I have a word of advice to give you."

"You must choose some other time, then, my lord," replied Albert Denyn: "at present I am in haste."

"And yet you must stay," rejoined the Lord of Chamblé, in a cold and somewhat sneering tone. "What I have to tell you is of moment, too; for if you do not attend to it, you may fall into disgrace."

"Stand back, sir, and let me pass!" cried Albert Denyn. "There are men deserting from the castle, and it may be my good lord's wish to stop them. Stand back, I say, or by the heaven above us I will cast you over into the court beneath! Each moment you are doing an injury you can never repair;" and thrusting the young knight out of his way with a force that he could not resist, Albert Denyn strode on, attending but little to the fierce mutterings of the angry noble, and soon reached the apartments of the count.

A door opening at once from the stairs led into an antechamber, where two stout yeomen slept with their bed drawn across the entrance of the inner room. It was with difficulty that Albert Denyn awoke them; but, having at length, if we may use the expression, updrawn these living bolts, he entered the chamber of the count and strove to rouse the page, who lay on a truckle-bed at the old nobleman's feet. The boy, like the yeomen, however, tired out with a long day's march, slept like the rock on which the castle was built; and ere Albert Denyn had made the slightest progress in awakening him, the count started up, demanding, "Who is there?"

The matter was soon explained; and the count, rising at once, threw on his furred gown, exclaiming, "We must stay these cowards: they will do quite as well upon the battlements as marks for the enemy's arrows as better men."

"I fear, my lord, it is too late," replied Albert Denyn; "for I met your good friend the Lord of Chamblé, who would insist upon stopping me, to speak of something, I know not what, and in the mean time the mischief must have been done."

"Lead on, however!" cried the old lord—"lead on to the spot where you heard those voices. We must at least see how they contrived to escape; for by the duchess's permission I ordered all the gates to be strictly closed, and watched by my own men."

As Albert Denyn anticipated, the court was found deserted, but the path which the deserters had taken was discovered without difficulty. A large arched doorway, through which a tall horse could be led with ease, was open on the eastern side of the court; and when, by the light of torches, which were soon procured, Albert and the Lord of Mauvinet entered the passage with which the door communicated, and advanced

some fifty or sixty paces therein, they could hear the sound of horses' feet echoing along the vault from a distance, showing that the fugitives were beyond recall.

The old lord pursued the examination, however, observing with a grim smile, "This place may serve as an entrance for brave enemies, as well as an exit for cowardly friends."

Various gates and heavy doors were found left wide open; and these being closed and other precautions taken for the defence of the place, the Lord of Mauvinet and his companions returned to the court, to inquire who were the deserters and how many effective soldiers were left within the walls. Just as they were issuing from the vault, however, they were met by the young Lord of Chamblé, who advanced furiously upon Albert Denyn, exclaiming, "Villain, you struck me! and if I live another hour I will punish you as such a presumptuous slave deserves."

Though the blood mounted high on Albert Denyn's cheek, and his heart burned within him, he replied calmly though sternly, "I struck you not, my lord, though I thrust you from my way when you stayed me in doing my duty. Villain I am none, young sir, thanks to God and the hand of the emperor; and as to presumption, I know not what you mean, for I have never presumed towards you at least."

"My Lord of Chamblé," cried the Count de Mauvinet, "I must beseech you to forbear. This youth is as noble in heart as any in the land: I owe him more than life—my daughter, and my daughter's safety. Believe me, you have mistaken him: he could never intend to offend you, and only acted in haste, as no time was to be lost. He is not one to presume in any shape."

"My lord count, you are blind," replied the young knight sharply: "you see not how far he dares to presume. Ay, sir, he does presume upon some slight services he may have rendered—he presumes, I say, to raise his insolent eyes even to your daughter, and yet you see it not."

The count gazed on the young lord's face as if struck dumb, and then turned a stern and inquiring glance upon Albert Denyn, whose cheek was very pale, and whose look was bent upon the ground.

"Speak!" cried the Lord of Mauvinet, "speak, Albert. Do you not hear his charge?"

"I hear, my lord," answered Albert, "a vague charge which implies a falsehood that it does not boldly assert. If this lord would merely say that I love your daughter, he tells the truth; for who could live with her as I have lived and not

love her? I do, my lord; I love her better than any other being or thing on earth—the companion of my childhood, the friend of my youth, the brightest and the best of earthly beings. But this, my lord, is a privilege of the lowest in all the land—to love and admire that which is fair and high. It is a duty of chivalry, and from such duties I am not now, thank God, excluded. But if he would say that I love her with but one purpose or one thought that is not high and noble; if by the words, ‘raising my eyes to her,’ he means that I aspire to that which is impossible, I tell him to his beard that he lies, and will prove it on him with ——”

“Hush, hush!” exclaimed the Lord of Mauvinet, who had listened in stern thoughtfulness while the young soldier spoke. “I will not suffer such words to pass on either side; at least not in times of peril like these, when every sword is wanted against the bosoms of the enemy. My lord, you have done Albert wrong. Every one on this earth has a right to choose out his fair lady, to love, and serve her by all honourable means; and the highest châtelaine in all the land—nay, the queen herself upon her throne—receives honour from the love of any gentleman, however poor his estate, provided he pass not the bounds of due respect. So say the laws of chivalry, my lord; and due respect, I am right sure, Albert Denyn will never forget towards the daughter of his friend. Nay, frown not, my good lord: I entreat you both, forbear all angry words and all sharp discussions. He who says one syllable more, at least till all these troubles be appeased, makes an enemy of me. Let each man honour the lady that he loves by doing great deeds in behalf of his native land; and so no more of this. Now call all the soldiers in the castle forth, and let us see who are these runaways.”

“My lord, my lord!” cried a trooper in breathless haste from the wall above, “there is danger abroad. The bands of villains are advancing against the castle, I do believe, for I heard but now a rushing sound coming up from the plain. It was like the noise of a full stream, or a heavy wind blowing through a forest in the winter; and then came a sharp cry, mingled it seemed with groans. I fear they have come upon some poor fellow’s house and murdered those within.”

“More likely have caught the cowards who have deserted,” replied the Lord of Mauvinet, “and given them due punishment for their treachery. Away to the walls! call all the men out. Carry forth torches on the battlements, and light the beacon on the highest tower. Let them see that we are prepared for them.”

Thus saying, the good seneschal strode up to the platform to look out. Albert Denyn and several others followed close upon him, but all was obscurity round about. The moon was down, not a star was in the sky. The old trees which surrounded the castle at a great distance could hardly be distinguished from the dark masses of the ground; and in vain the eye of the count plunged into the void of the night, seeking for human forms: he could discover nothing. There was a low rustle, indeed, but nothing like the voice of man met the ear: it might be the wind beginning to rise; it might be the rushing of the Oise, heard through the stillness of the night.

"Can you see anything, Albert?" whispered the seneschal to the young man-at-arms, with his eyes bent sternly upon the darkness—"can you see anything? I am growing blind, I think."

Albert Denyn did not reply; but he put his hand back to one of the yeomen who stood a step behind, took from him the long yew bow which he carried, and said in a low voice, "An arrow!"

The youth laid the feather to the string, stretched forth his left arm to its full extent, and drew his right hand to his ear. The string twanged, the arrow whizzed from the bow, and the next instant a shrill cry of agony, followed by a confused murmur and the rushing sound of many feet, rose from the other side of the moat. Almost at the same moment the flame of the beacon towered up high in the air above, and by the glare a crowd of grim faces and shadowy forms were seen within half a bow-shot of the walls.

"Well done, my boy! well done, Albert!" cried the seneschal: "you have sent one of them to Satan's kingdom, at all events. Now, my men, bring us up some piles of wood. We must keep up a blaze along the battlements till daybreak, lest they try to take us unawares."

No attack was made, however, during the night, by the immense body of armed peasantry which now surrounded the castle. Some one of importance seemed to have been hit by Albert Denyn's shaft, and when daylight dawned a great deal of confusion and hurrying to and fro was still remarked among them. Still it was an awful sight to see that ocean of grim faces, marked by every wild and savage passion, and that crowd of powerful forms covered with every sort of wild and unusual arms, all surrounding the Castle of Beaumont, which, alas! now numbered within its walls not more than forty persons capable of making any effectual defence.

The good Lord of Mauvinet counted his garrison over eagerly, but with an undaunted look; and when some one said in a low tone, "We shall never be able to keep the place," he replied, "I have fled from them once, and I will not fly again. The place is strong; and were the women not here, I would hold it out till the very last, and die amongst the walls rather than abandon them. Would to God the women were not here! they weaken my heart and make an infant of me. However, we must double our energies and our activity. You, Albert, defend the north tower with your companion Scroope and four of the soldiery. It is one of the points of the greatest danger. My Lord of Chamblé, you with your men take the eastern side: it is scarcely less perilous than the other. Herestall and Huguenin, you go to the south tower: the west needs no defence but its own walls. I will be with you all from time to time. There seems to be store of arrows, quarrels, and every implement of war in the place: we will have them brought up as speedily as possible, and you must pour them upon the enemy without ceasing. The Duchess said there were mangonels somewhere—they might serve us bravely if we could find them. Let some one ask her where they may be found."

In about half-an-hour the attack on the castle commenced, and was met with that sort of gallant determination which renders small means more available than the most extensive supplies in the hands of the irresolute. We will not pause, however, to detail the strife that took place, for we may have had too much of such things already. Suffice it that it was waged with wild and savage fury on the one part, and with steady though fiery courage on the other, through the greater part of the day.

It is strange what companionship in such scenes of peril and exertion can do to soften animosities, and make even the fiercest passions of the human heart forget their virulence, at least for a time. Towards three o'clock, Albert perceived that the attack, which had slackened on his own side, was directed against the eastern wall, where the young Lord of Chamblé had been placed, and he sent three of his men to give him aid in repelling it. Shortly after, the tide turned again, and the northern tower was once more assailed with violence. Louis of Chamblé then came round himself to ask how the day went with Albert Denyn; and to see if he could give him help in driving back the enemy.

Albert thanked him, but said no; and pointing with his hand to a spot amidst the crowd beneath the walls, he added,

"We must all look well to ourselves now, my good lord, for the fiercest of the strife is yet to come. Do you see that man on horseback?"

"Ay," answered the young knight; "I saw him once before, at Ermenonville. Who is he? He seems to have just arrived."

"He has so, my lord," replied Albert. "Hitherto these fools have been knocking their heads against stone walls, 'out now you will find them better directed.' That is the fiend William Caillet! I would willingly give my right hand to-morrow morning to be one hour with him upon the hill-side this night."

The anticipations of Albert Denyn proved correct. The plan of the assault was immediately changed: the northern and eastern parts of the Castle of Beaumont were left comparatively at peace, though two strong bodies of the revolted peasantry still remained opposite to them; and the principal attack was directed at once against the southern tower, which was a large building lately added to the old Castle of Beaumont, and connected with it by an arch over the moat, which had not yet been carried round it.

There was now no longer any wavering, any hesitation among the insurgents: the assault of the peasantry was not only fierce, but incessant; and labouring with pickaxes and with iron bars, though numbers of them fell by arrows and by stones cast down upon their heads, they succeeded in shaking the foundation of one part of the tower; and towards seven o'clock a large portion of the wall gave way, crushing a number of assailants under it, but leaving an entrance open into the tower itself.

The Lord of Mauvinet, and one of his chief followers named Herestall, had taken the defence of that part upon themselves; but both Albert Denyn and the young Lord of Chamblé, seeing that the assault had ceased at every other point, had yielded to their impatience, and joined the party in the tower.

When the first stones were loosened from the foundations, however, Albert Denyn had disappeared; but he returned just at the moment when, the fall of the wall being inevitable, the seneschal and the rest were retiring from the spot which had been undermined.

"We must defend the bridge over the moat, Albert," said the Lord of Mauvinet; "or break it down, if it be possible."

"I have thought of that, my lord," replied the youth; "and everything is prepared."

"It is very strong, is it not?" demanded the count: "how long will it take to throw it down?"

"One minute, and three blows of an axe," replied the young soldier: "I have had the beams sawn underneath."

"Thanks, thanks, my dear boy!" replied the Lord of Maunivet: "you have saved us half-a-dozen lives at least."

"Then I beseech you let me finish the work, my lord," replied Albert: "I would give a year of life to strike one blow hand to hand with the enemy."

"Do it, do it, my dear boy!" said the old lord. "There, there goes the wall!" and down it rolled in thunder.

"Away with you! away with you! over the bridge, my men!" cried the seneschal; "Albert, you and I will be the last."

"I with you! I with you!" exclaimed the young Lord of Chamblé.

"Ay, but we are all under Albert's command for the moment," said the count: "he breaks down the bridge. He has won the honour well. Here, here they come! Back, back, my lord, to the bridge! Now, Albert! now, my boy! give them not too much time. This axe is heavier than yours."

Albert caught the ponderous weapon from the seneschal's hand, and retreating side by side with him, he struck a blow with his full force upon the spot where he had caused the wood-work to be sawn through on one side of the bridge. A large portion of the structure, stone, and lime, and beams, and iron, plunged down in dust and ruin into the moat beneath.

"Quick, my lord! quick!" he cried; "pass over! Tread lightly, I beseech you!"

"They are breaking down the bridge! they are breaking down the bridge!" cried the voices of the peasantry, rushing up over the fallen walls of the tower.

"Out of my way! out of my way!" shouted the thundering voice of Caillet; and darting forward with the leap of a tiger, he sprang towards Albert Denyn, who stood with one foot upon the entrance of the bridge and the other upon the threshold of the arched doorway which led to the platform of the captured tower.

"That to send thee to hell!" cried Caillet, striking a sweeping blow with his long sword at the neck of Albert Denyn.

But the young soldier caught it upon his shield, without wavering more than if he had been struck with a willow-wand; and whirling the battle-axe over his head, he dashed

it with such force upon the helmet of Caillet, that driving in the steel-cap, it hurled him backwards, wounded and bleeding, into the mass of peasantry that were following close behind. With one bound, Albert Denyn then sprang across the bridge, and two more blows upon the wood-work of the ruined arch placed a yawning chasm between the southern tower and the old castle of Bearmont.

A flight of arrows, which told sadly amongst the peasantry in the tower, now poured upon them from the walls of the castle; and in a few minutes after, the part of the building they had gained was abandoned by the Jacques, who retired, carrying with them, apparently with much care, one of their wounded leaders to a group of trees at some little distance. The rest of the insurgent force around the castle remained firm, but did not renew the attack; and as Albert Denyn, with a feeling of proud satisfaction at his heart, stood leaning on the battle-axe which had done such good service, and gazing out upon the dark masses of the enemy, the good Lord of Mauvinet grasped him by the hand, saying, "I trust you have killed the villain, Albert. I never yet beheld a better blow. But come; they will do no more to-night, and we all want refreshment. We will place a watch upon the walls, and seek for some wine and meat."

Thus speaking, the old nobleman turned away and descended to the hall; but Albert Denyn remained upon the battlements, musing deeply and sadly upon the fruitlessness of all that he could do to remove the original stain of his birth. After pausing for some time, he sent down for some food, saying that he wished to remain on the walls and watch; and there he saw the dull shades of night creep on once more upon the grey and heavy sky.

He was sitting thus upon one of the stone benches of the parapet when the young Lord of Chamblé approached the spot where he had placed himself, and said, "I have come to seek you myself, for your noble friend, the Lord of Mauvinet, wishes to speak with you."

Albert rose in silence and followed him; and as they passed through one of the stone passages where there was a torch, he saw the eye of the young nobleman fixed upon him with a look of much interest, though there was still some sternness mixed with it. What was to come next Albert Denyn did not know; but it is only people of unsteady minds that are ever taken by surprise: men of strong principles are always prepared.

On entering the hall he found the Lord of Mauvinet alone:

his sword, unbuckled, lay upon the table before him, and there was an expression of stern sadness about him which was soon explained. He held out his hand to Albert Denyn, who kissed it affectionately, and the seneschal then said, "Albert, my mind is made up never to yield the Castle of Beaumont. I will hold it out to the last; but, as I told you this morning, the thought that there are four women in it, and one of them so high in rank, hangs like a weight upon me. I have determined to send them away; I have spoken to the duchess, and she consents. They must have a small guard; and your hand, which has so often defended and delivered Adela, must protect her now."

Albert Denyn cast himself upon his knee before his ancient master. "My lord, I do beseech you," he cried, "let me stay with you; let me stay and share your fate, whatever it may be—to die with you, if God wills it so, and if not, to live and share your glory. Hear me, my lord, hear me. I know that the task you would give me is one of danger, honour, and high esteem; but here is this noble gentleman standing beside you, much more worthy of the distinction than I am; fitted in all respects to give protection to the Lady Adela, and doubtless desirous to show what great deeds he can do in her defence. Let him go upon this generous task, my lord, which befits him far better than it does me; while I, a poor adventurer, without home or name, remain to do what is indeed my duty, and defend with my heart's blood that good old master to whom I owe everything from childhood until now."

The tears came into the old seneschal's eyes, and he laid his hand fondly on Albert's head, saying, "God bless you, my son! but it must not be. You know that I value my children more than my own life; and if I should die, you will live to be the defence and prop of my son, who, thank God, is safe as yet in Touraine. You will not refuse to go with Adela, Albert; this noble lord accompanies you; and to your mutual care and honour I confide both her and that high lady who takes part in the journey. Fear not for me, Albert. I doubt not to hold out the castle till help arrives; the more so, indeed, now that the other tower is gone. With our small means it was but an encumbrance, and it can do nothing now against us."

"But, my lord," replied Albert Denyn, "we take men from you."

"Not half so many as were required to defend that tower," replied the old lord. "I shall give you but four—your com-

panion Scroope and three others. You two will make six; there are four women—ten in all."

"But think you, my lord," said Albert, "that we shall be able to cut our way through with so small a force?"

"You must not make the attempt," replied the old lord: "our sally from Ermenonville has put them upon their guard; but the passage, the passage under ground, my dear boy: the duchess has shown me where it issues forth. It is to the right there, far beyond their line—at least, beyond their line when the sun set."

"Then why not come yourself, my lord?" said Albert. "Let us all abandon the castle; you cannot be expected——"

"No, no!" cried the veteran soldier: "I have fled once; I have fled once; I will not fly twice for all the Jacques in Brie! Not a word more, my boy. Guide the ladies all safe to Meaux; the market-place there is impregnable; then send me help as speedily as possible. But remember, both of you, young men," he continued, "that the safety of those who are dearest to me may be fatally compromised if there be still one thought of misunderstanding between you."

"There shall be none on my part, noble count," replied the young Lord of Chamblé, holding out his hand frankly to Albert Denyn. "I find I have mistaken him; and if we must still be rivals, our rivalry, for the time at least, shall consist alone in seeing who can do most to guide, defend, and comfort the ladies committed to our charge. What say you? do you pledge yourself to this?"

"By my honour and hopes of heaven!" replied Albert Denyn, grasping the hand the other gave him. "When shall we set out, my lord?"

"Some two hours hence," answered the Count de Mauvinet. "They will all then be asleep. Nevertheless, you must proceed with great caution. Let one go out first, to make sure that there is no party beyond the mouth of the vault. If he do not come back or give a signal, the rest can follow. In the mean time, I will send some flights of arrows amongst them from the other side, so as to create confusion in that quarter."

"In an hour and a-half, my lord, then, I will be ready," said Albert Denyn, "and yet I would fain stay; but I will obey you in this also, and if I live will bring you succour ere three days be over. Fare you well, then, for the present, my lord: I will go and watch those men. This night is somewhat lighter than the last, and I should much fear for the result of our expedition, did I not trust that the head which

was most likely to watch for our destruction lies on an aching pillow, with no great power to rise."

"Ay, or on a still one, from which it will never rise again," replied the Lord of Mauvinet.

As Albert Denyn had said, the night was somewhat clearer, and his last look from the battlements ere he descended to the court-yard at the appointed hour, showed him that, as before, the principal body of the insurgents lay before the great gates of the castle, while another smaller party, but still some thousands strong, were pressed close round a postern to the east, by which they doubtless thought that an escape might be attempted.

"Keep the torches moving quickly round the walls," said Albert to one of the sentinels on guard; and then, mounting to the beacon tower, he bade the man slacken the flame a little, saying, "Our good lord is going to give them soon a flight or two of arrows."

After one more glance towards the fields, he descended and found all prepared. Adela and the duchess, with two other women, appeared a moment or two after; the countenance of the first very pale, the second preserving the same light and somewhat careless bearing which she had always hitherto maintained.

"Here, young gentleman," she said, as soon as she saw Albert—"tell your sweet friend here that there is not so much danger as she fancies. Me she will not believe."

"I trust that there is not much danger, indeed," replied Albert; "for if we find that there is any one near the sally-port, or whatever it may be, at the end of the vault, we can but retreat to the castle again, and my good lord will keep some one there to give us admission."

"I will, I will," replied the old Lord of Mauvinet; "but I will see you forth myself. Now lead the horses. Do you know, madam," he continued, speaking to the duchess, "whether the roof rises, so that you can mount before you issue forth?"

"Oh, yes, my lord," she replied—"there are some fifty yards of a dark sort of cavern in the rock, beyond the last gate; one can mount there. My Lord of Chamblé, you are my knight for the time; you shall win high thanks if you bring me safe to Meaux."

Thus speaking she led the way onward through the vault, lighted by a single torch, with the horses led after. The Lord of Mauvinet paused for a moment, to give some orders for diverting the attention of the insurgents to the other side of

the castle, and then followed quickly. The vault was long, and not a word was spoken: the hearts of all there present were too full for words. At length, however, they reached the last door and entered the natural cavern.

"Farewell, my lord!" said the duchess, extending her hand to the count. The old seneschal pressed his lips upon it, and then casting his arms round his daughter, he held her to his heart with a long and close embrace. Adela's tears fell fast upon his cheek as he bent to kiss her; and feeling that it was too much for either of them to speak, he lifted her on her horse in silence.

"Albert," said the count, in a low but solemn voice, grasping the young soldier's hand—"Albert, I trust her to you, with but one injunction—mark you obey it! Should you and be made prisoners by these slaves, let her not fall alive into their hands. You understand me. Slay her if you love her. Slay her, as I would slay her; and her spirit and mine will thank you for it in heaven!"

"I will give her my dagger, my lord," replied Albert, calmly: "I shall be dead ere then!"

CHAPTER XXXVII

"I CANNOT follow them so fast, Albert; I cannot follow them so fast: my horse is very lame, and will not go on."

"Yet a little while, dear lady; yet a little while: I fear we are not past all danger yet. Their hands stretch out far and wide around the castle, and methinks I see a light yonder which may belong to them. Stay—I will dismount and see what is the matter; perhaps it may be a stone in the beast's foot."

It was in vain, however, that Albert Denyn examined; no stone could he find; but still the horse went lame, and could not keep up with the rest.

"What is the matter?" demanded the voice of the duchess, as she remarked a pause and some confusion.

"The lady's horse, madam, is lame," replied Albert, "and cannot follow you so fast; and yet I am afraid that by any delay we may endanger your safety."

"We must have passed all danger now," said the duchess. "There is a light down there—from some peasant's cottage, doubtless. Let us turn our steps thither, and examine what is the matter with the beast."

"Madam," replied Albert, "your security must be the first thing thought of. Let the lady's saddle be put upon my horse—I will follow you on foot."

"Nay, nay," cried the duchess; "that shall never be. Take her behind you, good youth. Make a pillion of your cloak; but first let us see what yon light is. We must have gone nearly two leagues by this time, and I have no fear."

Thus saying, and without waiting for reply, she turned her rein in the direction of the light, and rode on with the young Lord of Chamblé. It soon became evident that they were approaching some huts; but before she reached them, Albert Denyn spurred on and laid his hand upon her bridle, saying, "I beseech you, madam, let me go forward first on foot—I

hear voices speaking. Here, Scroope, hold my rein for a moment, and for heaven's sake make up a pillion for the Lady Adela behind my saddle. I will be back in an instant, madam; but if you hear me shout loudly, ride on with all speed and leave me to my fate."

As he spoke, Albert dismounted and advanced towards the light; but when he came nearer to the huts, he could distinguish that the sounds which had met his ear as he rode up were those of complaint and pain.

The cabins were few in number; all were dark save one; and by the rays that issued from it Albert gazed around, but could see no human being near. He approached close to the door and listened; but the first thing that broke the silence was merely a groan of anguish.

"Ah! that does me good to hear," said a shrill voice. "It is medicine to me, it is balm; but yet I would fain have a drop of water. They have all left me, and they think I will die; but they are mistaken. Woman, give me a drop of water and I vow you shall go free: I kept you from them to be my paramour; but if you will give me a cup of water I promise you shall go free."

Another deep groan from a spot near broke in upon what he was saying, and then a sweet-toned woman's voice, full of deep sadness, replied, "How can I give you water with my hands tied? Think you that if I could give it to any one, it would not be to my own father, whom you have so inhumanly mangled?"

"Friend! give me water!" cried the same voice, frantically; "or when my men come, I will make them dishonour thee before his eyes."

A low sob was the only reply, and Albert Denyn, reassured, thrust open the door and entered.

The scene was a strange and horrible one as ever war with all its horrors presented. Cast down in one corner of the hut lay the mangled form of a tall and powerful man, past the middle age, whose dress, though torn and dabbled with blood, bespoke high rank and station. His armour had been stripped off, except the greaves, which were still upon his legs, while both his arms, from the way in which they lay, seemed to be broken. Crouching on the ground near him, with her hands tied behind her back, and gazing upon him with a look full of deep but agonised affection, was a beautiful girl of perhaps nineteen years of age, who seemed to have suffered no violence, though her robe was spotted with drops of blood, which probably had flowed from the dying man beside her.

A resin torch was stuck in one corner of the hut, and by its light was seen, on the other hand, a low bed piled up with straw, over which was cast a rich crimson cloak. Thereon was stretched the lean and withered form of old Thibault la Rue, with an arrow still left plunged in his right side, just beneath the arm, which seemed to keep him in great torture, and prevent him from moving hand or foot without pain.

As may well be supposed, all the eyes of those within the cabin were instantly turned upon the opening door; and when the fine majestic form of the young soldier appeared, covered with his coat of arms, a look of terror passed over the fiend-like countenance of the old man, while a cry of joy burst from the lips of the fair girl at the other side of the hut.

“It is a gentleman, my father!” she cried. “Oh God! it is a gentleman come to help us.”

The dying man strove to turn, but could not, and Albert Denyn, instantly advancing, cut the cord that tied the lady’s hands. Without a pause, she started to a table, on which stood a cup of water, and brought it to her father’s lips; while Albert gazed earnestly upon him, saying, “Surely I have seen your face before. Is it possible that I behold my good Lord of St. Leu?”

“Yes, yes!” cried the wounded nobleman, his lips now moistened and refreshed, “and you are the man of all others I would see. Take care of my daughter, good youth. Convey her safely to the Capital de Buch: she has a packet for him in her bosom, which he will give much to have. Away with her, quick! Mind not me. Thank God, she is unpoluted as yet! I trust her to your honour. Away! away!”

His mind, occupied by one all-engrossing thought, evidently took into consideration nothing else; but the poor girl again cast herself on her knees beside him, exclaiming, “I cannot, I will not leave you! Oh, my father! let me stay and die beside you.”

“Give me some drink! give me some drink!” shrieked the voice of the old man from the other bed. “Monsters! will you not give me some drink? May hell seize upon you all!”

No one attended to him, however—the hour of retribution was come—and the agony he had so often inflicted upon others now fell upon himself.

“I know not how I can save her,” said Albert Denyn, speaking in a low voice to the Lord of St. Leu: “we are ourselves embarrassed for chargers. One has fallen lame, and —”

“There must be horses near,” replied the dying man.

"Our own cannot be far off. They pursued us as we were trying to escape towards Paris: they caught us not far from this spot, and our beasts must be here. Take her! take her quick!"

"Stay!" cried Albert, "I will go and see what can be done."

Thus saying, he left the hut, and found that the Duchess of Orleans and her party had gradually advanced to within a few steps of the spot where it stood. To her and the rest he explained briefly what he had seen. The other hovels were searched immediately, and in one of them three or four horses were found, with a young peasant of some twelve years old, dressed in the rich embroidered suit which had once covered a nobleman's son, sound asleep on some straw in a corner of this temporary stable. The boy was roused and tied hand and foot, and two fresh horses were brought forth for Adela and Margaret of St. Leu. There was a third powerful beast, which had evidently been the charger of a man-at-arms; and a vague hope of being able to save the Lord of St. Leu himself crossed the mind of the young soldier, as he turned back with Scroope and another to the little hut. The moment he entered, the voice of the old man Thibalt assailed him, calling him by name, and beseeching him to bring him water.

"If you will give me but one drop, Albert Denyn," he said, "I will tell you a secret you would cut off your right hand to hear!"

"Albert Denyn!" cried the young Lady of St. Leu, looking at him. "Are you Albert Denyn? Give him some water."

The youth took the cup and filled it from a jar that stood near. The unfortunate wretch clutched it eagerly and drank, and then exclaimed, "More! give me more!"

"What is your secret, then?" demanded Albert Denyn.

"Listen, listen!" said the old man.

The youth put down his ear, and Thibalt whispered a word which made the light flash from the young soldier's eyes.

"Give me more drink!" cried Thibalt, seeing the effect that he had produced; "give me more drink and I will tell thee all."

Albert turned eagerly to seek it; but at that moment the young Lord of Chamblé entered the place, and his eyes fell at once upon old Thibalt de la Rue.

"Ha!" he exclaimed, "this is the darkest fiend of them all! Lying on my murdered brother's cloak too! Down to hell, old monster!" and ere Albert Denyn could stop him, he had driven his dagger into Thibalt's heart. With a yell, a gasp,

and a fearful contortion, the wretched old man gave up his spirit to its terrible account. ●

"My lord, you have stopped words I would have given a world to hear," cried Albert Denyn; "but it is done, and cannot now be helped. Dear lady," he continued, turning to the Lord of St. Leu's daughter, "perhaps we may be able to carry your father with us, if we be not sharply pursued. If he can sit upon a horse at all, I and another will support him in our arms."

"God of heaven reward you!" cried the girl. "I will reward you, too. Father, dear father! do you hear him?" and she again turned to gaze into her parent's face.

The wounded man made no reply. The eyes were fixed and glassy; there was a grey shade over the whole countenance; and Albert Denyn, starting forward, gazed at him intently for a moment. He took her hand, saying, "Lady, come away! Your cares are fruitless."

"One moment!" she said, in a calmer tone than he expected — "but one moment;" and bending down her head, she pressed her lips upon the cold brow of her dead father.

"Now," she continued, "now I am ready. I have no right to keep you longer."

Her eyes were dry, but an unwonted drop glistened on the lids of Albert Denyn as he said, "Alas, poor lady! would that we could have saved him!"

She gave him a grateful look, but made no reply; and he led her out, accompanied by the rest, one of the rude soldiers, before they went, spurning the body of Thibault de la Rue from the straw on which it was stretched, and spreading the cloak over the dead form of the Lord of St. Leu. But few words more were spoken, and none that it may be necessary to repeat; for the recognition of Adela and Margaret of St. Leu was too full of sad feelings on both parts to admit of conversation. The saddle was changed from the horse which had fallen lame to one of those which had been brought out of the hut, the young Lady of St. Leu was placed upon another, and the party once more proceeded in the darkness. Two of the troopers lingered for a moment or two, indeed, and then came up at a quick pace; but Albert Denyn had heard a loud cry and a groan behind them, and he turned sharply to one of the men, saying, "You have not hurt the boy?"

"Out upon the wolf's whelp!" was the only reply; and Albert very well divined the fate of the unfortunate lad who had been left by the insurgents to guard the horses. It did not surprise him; for such was the merciless conduct of each

party to the other, in the fearful strife that was then going on, that no one could hope for pity if he fell into the hands of the enemy.

It may be easily imagined that the journey was a painful one to all. Apprehension, indeed, decreased every minute, as mile after mile was placed between them and the Castle of Beaumont. But there was scarcely one person present who had not some deep cause for care or for sorrow; and the lightest-hearted of the cavalcade seemed to be the Duchess of Orleans herself, who led the way with the young Lord of Chamblé, talking almost gaily, and keeping him constantly by her side.

Margaret of St. Leu, Albert Denyn, and Adela de Mauvinet followed, while between the two latter existed those deep feelings of anxiety and grief for the same objects, and from the same causes, which, like almost every other circumstance that had taken place in their mutual lives, were calculated to draw their hearts closer and closer together, and to render the love which was in the bosom of each unchangeable and eternal. They spoke but little in words, it is true; but their thoughts spoke, and each in mind was conversing with the other.

At length, as the grey streaks in the sky told the approach of day, Adela addressed her companion in a low voice, saying, "Where do you think you can obtain help for my father?"

"I know but one place," replied Albert Denyn, "in which it can be found, and but one person capable of giving it—Paris, and the King of Navarre. As soon as you are safe in Meaux, I must hasten to the king. Some other messenger must also be sent; for I risk my liberty by going, and may be arrested before I reach him."

"Oh! he will give no aid," cried Adela. "My father is of the regent's party, and Charles the Bad hates him bitterly; but the Captal de Buch—Albert, where is the captal?"

"By this time he must be in France," answered Albert Denyn. "But, alas! dear lady, he had but sixteen men with him: all the rest were left behind to aid the Teutonic knights. The dauphin is powerless, and there is no time to be lost."

"I fear there is not," said Adela. "I fear there is not, indeed. Oh! tell me the truth, Albert; tell me the whole truth. My father put on a face of hope and confidence, and said he could hold out the castle for a week; but I heard something of one of the towers being taken."

"That is no disadvantage, dear lady," replied Albert. "The tower was a weak point rather than a defence. We have broken down the bridge between it and the castle, and

as they have no machines of war, it gives them no assistance. I trust your father may hold out for a week, perhaps longer; the more so as I believe that villain Caillet—who, from his talent, is more to be dreaded than all the rest—is disabled, at least for a time. If his casque had not been of the best-tried steel, he would have been a corpse ere now. As it was, the battle-axe must have reached his head; for I saw the blood stain as he fell."

"God forgive me that I must rejoice," said Adela, "at any man's sufferings!"

"I think he is dead, lady," joined in one of the troopers who was riding near; "for I beheld the blow given, and he went down much like a dead man."

"No, no," answered Albert Denyn—"he died not on the spot; for I afterwards saw him walk to the rear, supported by two of his base companions; but for a time I trust that he is disabled. That old man, too, cannot direct them now; and he was as shrewd a miscreant as ever lived. It was a serviceable bow that sent that arrow to his breast."

"I rather think it was your own, Master Albert," replied the soldier who had previously spoken; "for that young wolf told us, before Peter cut his throat, that the old knave was wounded by an arrow shot in the darkness of the night, on their very first arrival under Beaumont."

"That is strange, indeed," said Albert Denyn; and after a moment's musing he added—"Let us hope for the best, dear lady. Look where the sun is rising brightly; so may a better day rise for us all!"

"God grant it!" cried Adela; "God grant it!" And she turned her glistening eyes on him who spoke, with a look which seemed to say, that if her day was to be bright, his happiness must have a share in making it so. "But still, Albert," she continued, "still some aid must be sought for my father. Whither shall we turn for that?"

"If the capital has not passed on yet to Paris," replied Albert, "he cannot be very far distant. I know the road he is to take; I will seek him and ask his counsel. Perhaps we can raise men, call the nobles to arms throughout the country, and march against these savages at once. But, lo! surely those are the buildings of Meaux. Two hours more will bring us thither."

Adela looked forward, and saw, at the edge of the plain that they were now traversing, some tall towers and spires, with several bright and glistening pieces of water, but, why she could not tell, her bosom did not experience that joy which

the sensation of renewed security generally inspires. She asked herself what next was to happen, and felt that, if the heart be prophetic, no great happiness awaited her there.

After a pause of about an hour, in a small town not far from the spot where Meaux first appeared to their eyes, they again renewed their journey, and entered the city about mid-day. There were many people in the streets, and a number more came out to gaze upon them as they passed; but Albert Denyn could not help thinking that he saw some scowling malevolence in the eyes of the citizens. Opposite the principal church, however, they were met by the mayor, to whom the Duchess of Orleans was known, and to whom she had sent forward a messenger from their last halting-place. He received her with fawning smiles and lowly inclinations of the head, and besought her to take up her residence in the town-house, at least for a time; but while they were yet parleying on the subject, a messenger arrived in breathless haste, saying, "That the young Duchess of Normandy, having heard of her fair aunt's arrival, had sent him to beg that she would join her instantly in the great market-place, where she and some other persons of quality were then residing."

The duchess rode on accordingly; and Albert Denyn followed with the rest, thinking it not a little strange to hear that the wife of the dauphin, the regent of the kingdom, should be making her abode in the *market-place* of Meaux. As they rode on, however, and passed over the old bridge across the river Marne, he perceived the meaning of that term, which before he had not understood. The stream of the Marne itself flowed between the city and the market-place, which was situated on an island formed by the river and by a deep and broad canal. A number of fine edifices surrounded the square where the weekly markets were held, and these buildings were protected by walls, towers, and ditches, like a regular fortress. The fortifications, indeed, did not embrace the whole of the island, the unenclosed space being covered by green pasture, upon which some cattle and sheep were feeding peacefully.

At the fortified gate of the market-place, when the fugitives from Beaumont arrived there, stood two men-at-arms, and two or three domestic servants, as it appeared; and when the great doors were thrown open, and Albert Denyn, together with the rest of the troop, followed the Duchess of Orleans in, the first object that his eyes lighted upon was the young Duchess of Normandy, with a number of other ladies and female attendants, come forth to greet her noble relation;

but he was surprised to see only two or three pages, and still fewer serving-men, without a single knight or man-at-arms to give them protection.

The two ladies embraced eagerly, and continued in conversation for some time, while the gentlemen who had accompanied the Duchess of Orleans remained at a little distance. At length the princess beckoned to Albert Denyn, and he could see at his approach that her face was graver than he had beheld it before.

"You are weary and well-nigh exhausted," said the duchess; "and yet, good youth, I doubt not that you will undertake to ride forth again within an hour, to do good service both to me and the lady that you love."

"I proposed, madam," replied Albert, "but to feed my horse, and to set out in order to rejoin the noble Capital de Buch, and lead him to the deliverance of the Lord of Mauvinet."

The lady paused thoughtfully, and then said, "Well, that must do. Can you trust the man Scroope to deliver a message faithfully?"

"I think I can, madam," replied Albert Denyn. "But let me hear its nature."

"The message I would send," answered the duchess, "is to the regent, now at Montereau. I would have him told that, left well-nigh defenceless as we are, we doubt the faith of the people of Meaux; and that, notwithstanding all the oaths and protestations of John Soulas and his companions, we believe him to be a knave, and that they mean to play us false. We would beseech the dauphin to return directly with force to deliver us, or worse may come of it. Now, good youth, take the man Scroope with you—you will find fresh horses in the stable. You can either trust him to seek the capital and go on with the message to the regent, or you can send him to the regent and seek the capital yourself. But I will tell you, that he who bears this message to the dauphin will meet the best reward in the regent's power to bestow."

"Madam," replied Albert Denyn, "Scroope's path and mine will lie for some way together. Perhaps I may meet the capital ere we are obliged to separate, for that noble lord comes by Provins and Melun. But if we are forced to part, believe me, madam, by all I hold most dear, I will do that which in my poor judgment seems at the time best calculated to bring you speedy aid; for if I judge rightly, the Lord of Mauvinet can make good his part much longer than you could do here with the very few men you have about you."

"There are some soldiers, sir, on the walls," answered the Duchess of Normandy; "but, alas! they are not many."

"No time is then to be lost, your highness," replied Albert Denyn: "I will go forth at once."

"At least take some refreshment," said the duchess. "Happily we have abundance here; though, alas! we know not but each meal we eat may be the last. There are plenty of fresh horses, too, in the stables."

Albert was turning away; but the Duchess of Orleans followed him a step, and then said in a low voice, "Your devotion pleases me, sir, and is worthy of high reward. In those points that you hold most dear, I will take care that you shall not lose by your absence. Though the page was not happy that loved the lady of high degree, yet there are times and seasons when the differences of station are swept away, and when bold love, if joined with valour and virtue, may be successful. Say a word to your fair lady before you go. Ask her if she have a token to send to her father—and now fare you well! My Lord of Chamblé," she continued, raising her voice, "I would speak with you for a moment. You must conduct our defence for us here in case of need, for we have great fear of these men of Meaux."

The young nobleman advanced; but Albert Denyn stopped him for a moment as he passed, saying, "Farewell, my lord: perhaps we may never meet again; but I know I leave the Lady Adela under the protection of a good knight and a strong sword. I think you heard what her father said to me as we parted. I trust that task to you, should such a dreadful day ever come; and I beseech you, and this noble lady also, to take care of that poor forlorn girl whose father we saw expire last night."

A few words to Adela, and a few to the orphan Lady of St. Leu, were all that Albert Denyn indulged in; and then, explaining to Scroope the task that was given them, he sought fresh horses in the stables of the market-place, and passing over the bridge, issued forth again from the town of Meaux.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

IF on this earth on which we live, and in this state of mortal being, a foretaste of that hell which evil actions prepare for men hereafter be allowed to visit the bosoms of the wicked, it must surely be when, in the struggle against virtue and right, they find themselves baffled and overthrown; when they see that holy obedience to God's high will, which they contemned as pusillanimous or scoffed at as feeble, triumphing in the power of wisdom and the might of justice over their furious weakness and their foolish cunning.

That foretaste of hell was in the heart of William Caillet, when, after having been dashed backward amongst his blood-thirsty followers by the hand of the youth he affected to scorn and despise, he was led away from the southern tower of the Castle of Beaumont, bleeding, stunned, and baffled.

Ere he could recover his recollection, Jacques Morne and another had drawn him not only away from the tower, but to a considerable distance from the fortress itself, out of the reach of the missiles which from time to time were poured from the walls. The peasantry as he moved slowly along gazed at him with anxiety and wonder. This was the first time that they had ever seen him wounded; and as his fiery courage had led him into the very front on every occasion of danger and strife, they had become possessed with a superstitious notion that he was invulnerable. His superiority of mind, his powers of language, his fierce daring, the calm, deliberate cruelty with which he committed or ordered barbarous acts, which the others performed when maddened by excited passions, his continual success, and his thirst as it were for strife and bloodshed, had all convinced them that he was a different kind of being from themselves; and, as there is always some justice in the appreciation of character by multitudes, however rude, the revolted peasantry imagined that their leader, if not absolutely a fiend, was endowed by the spirit of darkness with supernatural powers.

As Caillet recovered in some slight degree from the first

effects of the blow, he saw the dismayed and wondering eyes that turned upon him: and feeling that, unless he made a great effort, a part of the influence of his character would be lost with the people, he exclaimed, in his short, stern manner, "No farther!" and pushing from him on either side the men who were supporting him, he drew himself to his full height, and spreading out his shoulders, took in a deep, long breath.

The next moment, feeling that his strength was indeed gone for the time, he sat down upon the ground to hide his weakness, and in a full and yet powerful voice said to Jacques Morne, "Take off my casque; bring me a bucket full of water."

The casque was soon removed; and looking at the deep rent through the steel, as he held it on his knee, without attempting to stop the blood that continued flowing from his forehead, he continued to those around: "The blade must have been enchanted that, struck that blow. The tower, however, is ours. I knew that something must be paid for it, and it is well worth a few drops of blood. Let it flow, let it flow!" he continued, removing the hand of one of the men who attempted to stanch it with some bandages of linen which had been brought to the spot: "when enough has come, I will stop it myself. Did not somebody tell me, when I came up a few hours ago, that old Thibault had been wounded by an arrow last night?"

"Yes," replied one of the men with a sarcastic grin; "and he caused himself to be removed to a hut a mile or two behind, where he had laid a trap for the old Lord of St. Leu and the Lady Margaret, whom he intends to keep for his paramour."

"If he can think of paramours," answered Caillet, "he cannot be badly hurt, and must come up to-morrow to bear his share in the day's work. I intend to take the castle before noon. We have done enough for one day. Now, Morne, dip the bandages in the water; bind them round my head. Withdraw the men a little distance from the walls, as the sun is going down; but mind that they keep close together, and lie shoulder to shoulder through the night, that we may have no more escaping as at Ermenonville. I will go to yon cottage and have an hour or two's sleep. I have had none for several days. Come with me, Morne, for a while: I would speak to you as we go. I expect great tidings and great deeds to-morrow, my friends," he continued, turning to the peasantry who stood near; "and if my mind does not deceive

me, I shall lead you to a higher enterprise than any you have yet undertaken. Wake me if anything happens or if any messenger arrives; and an hour before daylight send a messenger to old Thibalt, bidding him come up by dawn."

Thus saying, Caillet turned and walked away, proceeding with a firm, strong step, an upright mien, and unchanged demeanour, till he had passed the greater part of the peasantry. He then, however, took Jacques Morne's arm, leant heavily upon it, and when he had reached the cottage, he cast himself down in a bed in the right-hand room, with a deep groan.

"What can I get you, Caillet?" said Jacques Morne: "you are badly hurt."

"No, no," he replied; "I am not. I shall be well to-morrow: my head aches with the blow, that is all. Bring me plenty of water to keep the bandages wet. Put a man to guard the door. Let me hear everything that happens during the night; and now leave me."

It was about two o'clock in the morning, when Caillet, who had at length fallen asleep, was roused by some one bringing him in letters. A torch was soon procured, and he read the contents eagerly and with a smile of triumph. Then turning to the messenger he said, "You come from Paris yourself?"

The man bowed his head, and Caillet continued, "Well, take some short rest. Go back and tell Vaillant and Giles that I will not fail them. I will be there to a moment, with twenty thousand men. I have no materials here, or I would write; but you know what to say, and will say it exactly."

The messenger retired; and Caillet asked those who had brought him in whether anything had occurred in the neighbourhood of the castle.

"Nothing," replied the man; "nothing could happen. There is not room for a mouse to creep out of it between our men. They discharged a flight of arrows, indeed, about midnight, but without effect."

Caillet started from off the bed, and gazed in the face of the man who spoke. "A flight of arrows at midnight!" he exclaimed—"that was not without its purpose. We shall hear more anon. Where lies Jacques Morne? Bring the casque after me. But stay—give me a cup of wine."

While the peasant was seeking in the other chamber of the cottage for the wine that Caillet demanded, there were voices heard at the door, and the insurgent leader went out himself to see who it was.

"Here is bad news, Caillet," said Jacques Morne, who was one of the speakers. "Old Thibalt is dead!"

"Then death be his paramour!" cried Caillet, with a bitter and somewhat wild laugh. "What had the old dry lath to do with paramours? I wonder if his inquisitive mind have found the way to hell yet? It was no bad hand that shot that arrow. That old man would have made mischief amongst us, Morne. He could not be honest even with his brethren."

"It was not the arrow killed him," replied Morne, in a low tone. "There was a dagger-wound in his heart; and a horse-boy, who was found dying, said that there had been several women and five or six men there, mounted on strong horses. They stabbed old Thilalt and cut the boy's throat, it seems; but he is still living, if you would ask him any further questions. I fear, Caillet, that they have escaped from the castle; for the boy heard one of them call another Albert Denyn, and they spoke about going to Meaux. Yet how they got out I cannot tell; for on my life they must have marched across our bodies."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Caillet, with a wild, fiendish, mocking laugh: "they will make me hunt them throughout all France; but so shall we find the richer castles and towns to plunder, and the more of these locust nobles to destroy. Meaux! gone to Meaux, have they? Well, then, we will go to Meaux too. Go, go, Morne: go! Gather all the people together where I can speak to them. Get the men of influence in the front. I have great news for them, Morne; so let the tidings of the principal people having escaped from the castle spread among them. I will be there by daybreak."

As soon as Morne was gone, Caillet quaffed off the cup of wine that the peasant brought him; and then, sitting down, leaned his head upon his hands, muttering to himself, "How it aches! Nor are my thoughts so clear as they used to be. I wonder why images that one would banish will return to plague us—that I, who can command thousands of men, cannot command these phantoms, these creatures of my own brain."

"That old man!—that Walleran Urgel, that I slew in the wood!—that daughter of the Lord of Plessis, that I spurned away from me to the bloodhounds that followed! and the little children too! I can see them standing, pale, at the other side of the room. How she did shriek when the men seized her! Hark! she is shrieking still! No! all is silence. The cry was in my own heart!

"But," he continued, "this is frenzy. I will go forth: the cool air will calm my brain. See, there is the grey morning! Harkye without there! bring my casque after me, and

lance; and thus saying, he wandered forth with his eyes bent upon the ground.

As soon as the sun had fully risen, a large body of the peasantry had been gathered together upon the slope descending from the castle. They were not all there, although William Caillet had commanded that all should be collected; but it was in vain with the mixed, undisciplined, many-passioned crowd, without any law or recognised authority whatsoever, to attempt a universal movement. General impulses might be given, carrying a great majority in a particular way; but the leaders had always found that there were numbers who, though not absolutely dissentient, yet straggled away to some other object, in spite of all that could be done to keep them together.

Such, then, was the case on the present occasion. Some fifteen or sixteen thousand men were collected, however; and amongst them all those who generally led the rest, receiving their directions from Caillet himself. Some standing, some sitting, some lying on the grass, now waited for his coming with not a little impatience; for the tidings had been spread amongst them that the principal persons who had been in the Castle of Beaumont on the preceding day had made their escape during the night, and also that some great enterprise was about to be proposed to them. They had just arrived at that period of the insurrection when the first ardour of their furious outbreak began to die away, and some new stimulus, some great object, was wanting to call forth again the same terrible energies which they had at first displayed.

At length there came a murmur from the side of the castle next to the gate, and in a minute after Caillet appeared amongst them; the impression of his presence being rather heightened than diminished by the sternness of his pale and dark but magnificent countenance, and by the bloody bandages that wrapped his brow.

He paused and looked around him in silence for a moment, and then said, "My friends, you have heard that the prey has escaped us for the time—I know not how, and it matters but little."

"We have discovered how! we have discovered how!" cried half-a-dozen voices. "We have traced the horses' feet from a cave hidden by the gorse and bushes there; but there are still men in the castle."

"It matters not," replied Caillet. "Those who made it worth taking are gone. You have heard that they have escaped, I say; but there is one thing that you have not heard—

that they have escaped only to fall again into our hands with greater certainty than ever. There were some of you that feared, there were some of you that doubted, when I told you that our very first success would bring millions to aid and support us in breaking our chains and crushing our enemies. What I have told you has now proved true: all your best hopes are fulfilled. The people of Paris—I mean the oppressed people of Paris—not only offer to join you, but call you to take part with them in a great enterprise; and the communes of another important city, with the mayor and magistrates at its head, offer to receive you as brothers, to give up the place to you, and to enable you at one blow to crush the whole brood of serpents that have poisoned France. This is more than I ever dreamed or hoped for. My friends, my dear fellow-countrymen, John Soulas, mayor of Meaux, offers to receive us, and our Parisian brethren, under Vaillant and Giles, into that great and important city. You will ask, perhaps, what is the advantage of that? There are some, indeed, who may think it will be enough to plunder the rich houses of the nobles therein, to sack the king's palace, to break into the many convents and abbeys it contains. But I tell you, all this is nothing in comparison with that which our entrance into Meaux will afford us. Listen and mark me. Shut up in the market-place of that town and the buildings that surround it, are the Duchess of Normandy, the young wife of the regent, Isabel of France, the regent's sister, a young and lovely woman, with two hundred others of all the highest ladies of the land of France. They have none to defend or help them: they are in our power; they are at our mercy. Wealth, too, and jewels in abundance, are there, and those who have fled from this castle have madly directed their course thither. Here are the letters of the mayor inviting us; here are the letters of Vaillant and his friends beseeching us to join them. It is for you—you, my friends—to say what shall be done. Speak! shall we continue the siege of this Castle of Beaumont, or shall I instantly lead you to Meaux?"

"To Meaux! to Meaux!" shouted a thousand voices. "Lead us to Meaux, brave Caillet!"

"We will have princesses for our wives and concubines," said one.

"We will not keep them long," answered another.

"The dagger can soon cut such marriage vows," cried Caillet, with a sneer upon his lip. "Is it to Meaux, then?"

"To Meaux! to Meaux!" again exclaimed the multitude.

"Well, then," continued Caillet, "let us not pause a mo-

ment. *Bring me a horse, and I am ready as I stand. Let a few remain here to blockade this place, that the men therein issue not forth to cut off the stragglers. Let others follow after, who are encumbered with their baggage or their wealth; but all that are young, and active, and daring, follow me without delay.*"

Ere half-an-hour was over, a great part of the immense multitudes which had been gathered together under the walls of Beaumont was in movement towards Meaux. A new impetus was given to them, and they rushed on like famished tigers, eager for blood or crime. It was night when they reached the town; and such was their impatient confidence, that on finding the gates shut it was with difficulty Caillet restrained them from attempting to storm the place. They spread themselves, however, through the smaller houses scattered about in the fields and on the banks of the river; and many a bright flame, rising up from the country for miles round Meaux, told of the scenes of devastation and violence that were taking place.

At the demand of the insurgent leader, the mayor himself came, early on the following morning, to one of the wickets, to speak with him who had already made himself such a meteor-like reputation for wonderful as well as horrible deeds. Caillet asked him but few questions, and those in a tone of authority and power, that made the magistrate shrink overawed before him. The first demand was, would the citizens throw open their gates to receive him, as had been promised, or should he open a passage through the walls, which would give him and his party speedy admission to the city.

The mayor replied in humble tone, "That not only would the gates be very soon cast wide to admit him, but that he would quickly see with what joy the people were ready to welcome him."

Caillet's last question was, "Did any of the fugitives from Beaumont enter Meaux to-day?" and on hearing a full account of the arrival of the duchess and her party, he muttered to himself, "Now, Adela de Mauvinet! now!"

Till nine o'clock all the entrances of the town remained closed, and it was with difficulty that Caillet restrained the Jacques; but at that hour the gates were thrown open, and the mayor himself appeared on horseback to usher the leaders in. Shouts and acclamations rang through the air, and it required no slight exertion to maintain a degree of order and regularity, as the peasantry were led into the city through the various narrow streets, and were directed in masses to-

wards the wide open space which fronted the bridge leading to the market-place.

There, new shouts burst upon the air, when the rude multitude found large tables spread for them in the midst of the streets, groaning with abundance, and the townsmen of Meaux in arms ready to provide everything they might want at their repast.

In the same place appeared likewise some fifteen hundred of the citizens of Paris, under the two insurgent chiefs Giles and Vaillant; and many were the smooth congratulations which the would-be-polite Parisians poured forth upon Caillet, as he rode on by the side of the mayor. But the stern, dark leader of the peasants' revolt replied to them very briefly, yet in words which, even accustomed as their ears were to a higher sort of eloquence than the country people ever heard, struck and astonished them, and at once taught them that they had come there to be led, and not to lead.

Caillet stood by while the peasants devoured the food that had been prepared for them, glancing his eyes from the walls and towers of the market-place on the other side of the Marne to his rude followers, and muttering to himself, "I must allow them to sate one beast's appetite before I lead the wolves to gratify another. This place is stronger than I thought," he said aloud, speaking to the Parisians and the mayor. "It will take us two days to reduce it, if there be many men therein."

"Two days!" cried the mayor—"more than that, good sir, though there be not a score of men within the place."

Caillet gazed at him with a scornful smile. "Why," he replied, "it is the work of a carpenter to take it! It needs no general. Have you no boats or ladders? This bridge indeed they can defend. But give me boats and ladders, and we will be in that market-square within an hour. They must be made, I know; but that can well be done in two days, as I have said."

"And yet, my good friend," answered the mayor, speaking to him in a low voice, that the rest of those around might not hear, "did I not understand you rightly, that there is a lady in the place whom you would fain reserve to yourself from less scrupulous hands? The same is the case with me. If we assault the wall at many points, who can tell where the entrance will first be made. If we attack the gate alone—"

"You are right," said Caillet: "we will attack the gate; but it shall not require more time to take the place. What carpenters have you here? Let them be brought: with planks

and heavy beams of wood we will soon shatter that gate to atoms, and have a fair way in."

Carpenters were accordingly called forward; beams and planks were procured; and under the direction and continual superintendence of Caillet, one of the vast and powerful machines was commenced which in those days supplied the place of cannon. The construction proceeded with great rapidity; and the insurgents, heavy with wine and meat, gathered round the spot where the carpenters were labouring, and viewed their progress with surprise and admiration. But their wonder was still more excited by Caillet's knowledge and skill, he alone, of all the persons present, being able to direct the workmen in what they had to do. The rude Jacques gazed and muttered, commenting upon every part of the work: and though they knew generally that the object of the machine was to drive down the walls or burst open the gates, much did they marvel at many of the things they saw, asking each other, "What is that for? what is that to do?" and still they turned their eyes to Caillet, who stood stern and gloomy, giving no explanation to any one, but ordering with clear precision everything that was to be done.

"I believe he is something more than a man," said one of the peasants.

"I think he is the devil himself," murmured another.

"I have heard," answered a third, "that his sword cuts through an enemy without his ever moving an arm."

"Joachim Verger, who was there when he killed Antoine the robber," whispered another, "told me that his blade gave but one wave, and the fellow's head rolled along the ground like a dropped pippin."

"He can read and write," said the person who had first spoken, "which is more than half the lords of the land can do; and where he got such knowledge, unless from the devil, I do not know."

Such was the conversation amongst one of the many groups of Jacques who wandered through the town of Meaux. It was a curious thing to see the different effects which their appearance in the city produced upon the citizens themselves, according to their various characters. There were some who had shut up and barred their houses, covered their windows over with planks, and blocked up the staircases that led to the higher stories. There were others a great deal more frightened than these at the presence of the Jacques in Meaux, who nevertheless stood at their own doors, with faces full of forced and fearful smiles, shaking hands with the rude pea-

santry, or offering them wine and hydromel. There were priests and monks who led them into the church or the convent; and, while in their hearts they were giving them to eternal condemnation, called down with loud voices the blessings of God upon them, and prayed for success to their holy cause. In short, all the hypocrisy of fear was enacted with various grimaces in different parts of the town of Meaux.

But there were other places where the Jacques were in truth willingly received, and where the poorest sort of artisans—those who were either driven to despair by unmerited poverty, or who were reduced to it by vice, debauchery, and bad conduct—hallooed on the fierce insurgents from the country, and excited them with the thought of the lewd horrors of the ensuing day, when they should have broken into the market-place of Meaux and torn the victims it contained from their only place of refuge.

During this time, however, the machine which was to batter down the gate proceeded rapidly, and ere night fell was well-nigh complete. The news spread through the people that at daybreak the next morning the attack would commence; and each man prepared himself, sitting at the doors and in the streets where tables were spread for them, with gluttony and drunkenness, for the brief strife and the brutal gratification of the following day.

In the mean while, however, Caillet, Soulas, Vaillant, and Giles, held counsel together, of a kind which perhaps might not altogether have pleased their followers, had they been able to hear it. They parted beforehand the principal captives amongst them: each claimed his choice of one, or perhaps two, of the fair unhappy beings who remained trembling within those walls. Soulas and Caillet were animated by individual passion, and each named the woman that was to fall to his share; but the other two were mad with crime and folly, and had well-nigh quarrelled as to who should seize upon the young wife of the regent. Vaillant, however, contented himself at last with the Duchess of Orleans; and all that remained to be settled was the means of securing to themselves, in the midst of such a scene as was to ensue, the captives they had thus appropriated. Every one, however, had, or fancied he had, a certain number of devoted followers who would obey his will. Soulas had a guard at his disposal; Vaillant and Giles boasted how many they could command; but Caillet only said, "No one disobeys me twice!"

Ere he lay down to rest, he sent for Jacques Moric and spoke with him long. The man was but the slave of his will,

and ended by saying, "Oh, ay, Caillet; oh, ay, Caillet: there are plenty of people from about Beauvoisis that know her, and will help me willingly enough. I will answer for saving her, if you do not get hold of her first yourself—only I bargain to kill all the rest as I find them. I care not for women; and, as you said yourself one day, we must crush the dams if we would have no more vipers bred to sting us."

Caillet made no reply except by the word "Well!" and a nod of the head, which Jacques Morne rightly understood as an order to leave him.

As soon as he was alone, the leader of the revolt sat down in a large, curious-fashioned chair of ivory, which was placed near a table in the centre of the room; and, after leaning his head upon his hands for several minutes, and muttering to himself, "How it aches!" he turned and gazed around him upon the splendid furniture of the apartment in which the mayor had lodged him. It was in the king's palace at Meaux, and in the very bed-room which the regent had occupied, that John Soulas had placed the chief of the insurgent peasants. Rich arras hung around; the arms of France were emblazoned over each of the two doors; and a royal crown, surmounting the curtains of crimson velvet and gold which surrounded the bed, instantly showed Caillet that he was in the state-chamber of the monarch himself.

"How it aches!" he said again, pressing his hand upon his brow. "I wonder if the other heads which have lain upon that gorgeous pillow have throbbed as mine does now: perhaps they have; for to the weak, luxurious triflers from amongst whom our kings are chosen, the weight of a crown is a heavy burden; and that which would soon bring ease to my aching temples may well sicken them. A crown! It is a strange and mysterious garland that—not without its thorns, perhaps, but still with flowers of the brightest hue and finest odour. First in the wreath is power!—to command and to be obeyed, or simply to know that at our will millions are ready to act whatever part we please; to feel that our word, like lightning, can carry death from one side of the world to the other! Then comes the utter independence of our will, which no man under the rank of a monarch can be said to have—the despotic sway over ourselves, our actions, thoughts, and seemings! None of the hard task-masters that goad all inferior men through life affect the monarch—the care, the caution, the prudence, the hypocrisy, that are necessary for every one in his dealings with the world, let his mind be as high as it will, let his objects be as mighty and as wise as •

any that the earth can show! No one but a king can have this immunity. Why, here I am, myself, as much a slave as ever, forced to bend my looks, and shape my words, and suit my actions to the will, the whim, and the prejudices of the thousands that follow me. Not even a glance of my eye is wholly free. Have I not eternally to think of how it may suit the masters that I seem to command? No, no; freedom is only to be found in power; and, oh! what a grand thing it must be to feel one's self able not only to scorn and hate, but to make contempt and detestation felt! Then comes enjoyment—unlimited gratification, with no bounds but the capabilities of the body and the mind—varied, everlasting, with the whole world for a garden, and every delight that it produces for the fruit! How immense might be one's range, how marvellous the sudden contrast of pleasure; to change from fiery passion to calm tranquillity, from the burning flame of desire to the soft lulling draught of sweet music; to vary the corporeal pleasures of the table and the wine-cup, the dance and the chase, with the government of nations, the mazes of policy, the extension of territory, the battle and the victory! Then comes — But who is there?" he exclaimed, turning sharply round as he heard the door open behind him. "What would you have with me, Vaillant? and what makes you look pale?"

The man to whom he spoke—one of the chief leaders, as the reader already knows, of the revolted citizens of Paris who had joined with the Jacques in the attack on Meaux—advanced to the table with a quick step, and an air from which he made an effort to banish all anxiety. He could not effect that purpose so successfully, however, as to prevent the eyes of Caillet from perceiving that there was emotion within, and the latter repeated, "What makes you look so pale? Pray be seated, sir."

"Am I pale?" said Vaillant, drawing forward a stool. "It is fatigues. I came to seek you, honourable sir, to have some consultation with you without the presence of these citizens of Meaux. They are a faithless race, now joining with us, now perhaps turning against us. I know not what hold you have over them —"

"Power!" rejoined Caillet. "Go on!"

"But we citizens," continued Vaillant, "only rely upon them inasmuch as we have thousands behind us in Paris to support us. If anything were to go wrong in the capital, it is not impossible that these men would seize and deliver us to the dauphin."

"Hark, ye, Vaillant!" replied Caillet: "your friends in Paris have received a heavy blow! There is no use of hypocrisy with me."

"Ha!" cried Vaillant: "have you then heard the news?"

"I have not heard the news," answered Caillet, "but I have read it."

"Read it?" exclaimed the Parisian.

"Ay, in your face," said Caillet: "what are the tidings, Vaillant? speak them plainly and at once. Your situation and mine in regard to these men of Meaux is much the same. They cannot betray you without betraying me also; they cannot frustrate your objects without disappointing mine. As our security depends upon each other, our thoughts must be in common. What is the news? Is the dauphin in Paris?"

"No, no, not yet," exclaimed Vaillant; "but the great prévôt is dead! Stephen Marcel has been horribly murdered!"

Caillet mused without reply, though to the surprise of his companion a slight smile fluttered on his lip. It was not that he was amused to hear a man, whose business at that very hour was murder, talk with a seeming abhorrence of a similar crime: Caillet knew the human heart too well to wonder at that. But it was, that he was not displeased at the fact of the prévôt's death; and although he would hardly own his satisfaction to himself, the signs of it made themselves visible in his countenance. He had regarded Marcel with a certain degree of jealousy; he had seen him take the lead of the insurgents in the capital, as he himself had done in the country; and he had looked forward to the time when, the nobles having been destroyed and trampled under foot, and the royal authority having been utterly overthrown, he himself and the prévôt, holding from their several factions the only power remaining in the state, would stand up, two mighty rivals, one against the other, and end the great contest by a last struggle between themselves.

Though pleased, however, he was not wholly satisfied. With the peculiar boldness of his character, he had calculated upon making even Marcel himself an instrument for effecting his purposes, till such time, at least, as the strife necessarily began between them; and there was therefore before his eyes some derangement of his more remote schemes in consequence of the death of that celebrated demagogue.

Caillet's first words were, "We must find another."

They were addressed, indeed, more to himself than to his

companion; but Vaillant instantly exclaimed, "Another! where shall we find such another? Who shall supply the place of Stephen Marcel?"

"Why not, Pierre Vaillant?" demanded Caillet, turning upon him his flashing eyes: "such things are not impossible. But how did this man die?"

"All I know is but a report by word of mouth," replied Vaillant. "I hear, however, that he had covenanted last night to give admission to the King of Navarre ——"

"Ha!" cried Caillet, his brow becoming as black as night.

"And he had gone," continued the Parisian, "to the gate of St. Anthony to open it for the Navarrese troops, when two of those tyrannical royalists, John of Charny and Pepin des Essarts, fell upon him with their battle-axes on the steps of the Bastille. Marcel fought like a lion, they say, and so did those who were with him; but more came up to join the murderers, and they dashed his brains out upon the stones."

"Served the traitor right!" replied Caillet: "what had he to do with kings? Had he been true to the commons, he would not have died."

"But I hear," said Vaillant in a low tone, "that it was their intention to put all our enemies to death that night, and the houses were marked for the purpose. No man was to be left living but such as were known friends to the people. All the rest were to be slain without mercy."

"There he was right," replied Caillet: "and if such were really his purposes, he was more honest than wise; for to deal with king, or prince, or noble, otherwise than with a dagger or a spear, is a folly for any man who seeks to overthrow our tyrants. As for the rest, fear not this good mayor of Meaux: he is in my hands, my friend; and were he but to dream of treason, he should see this town one mass of flames before an hour was over. I have not cast down thirty fortified places, I have not trodden on the necks of thirty lordly barons, supported by their veteran bands, to fear a petty thing like Soulas, mayor of Meaux. But I tell you what we have to dread: it is that the dauphin, freed from his apprehensions of Marcel, may turn his forces against us here at once, before we have captured your market-place. Attacked in Meaux, we should fight to a disadvantage; and therefore, my good sir, we must resolve to force those walls and gates before noon to-morrow. We must not pause for sleep. Come with me! That engine shall be finished before I lay my head upon a pillow; at least so far that the roughest workman may complete it in my absence."

Thus saying, he raised the lamp from the table, and followed by Vallian, proceeded to the spot where the huge mangonel, which he had laboured to construct all day, lay still incomplete. The carpenters were again summoned to their task; and though they proceeded more slowly than he desired or expected, Caillet remained till he saw the engine ready, and nothing left to be done on the following morning but to bring up to the open space before the bridge the large masses of stone with which the mangonel was to be charged.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

It was night; and Albert Denyn and the stout soldier named Scroope sat by the fireside of the good curé Dacy; while his niece, her eyes sparkling with pleasure to render any service to him who had so greatly contributed to her deliverance, poured out from one of those large leathern bottles then in use some choice wine, which her uncle had brought forth to refresh the weary travellers after their long and hard day's ride.

At every village through which they had passed, Albert Denyn had inquired for the troop of the Captal de Buch; and as such a celebrated leader was not likely to cross the country unnoticed, he concluded from all he heard that his noble friend had not yet arrived. The fear that he might not appear in time, and thus disappoint one of his chief hopes for the deliverance of those he loved, saddened the young soldier and threw him into fits of deep thought; and imagination tormented him with apprehensions for Adela and her father.

"Poor as I am," cried Albert, at length, "I would give a purse of gold to have tidings to-morrow morning either from Beaumont or from Meaux."

"Rest, rest, my son," replied the curé, "and trust in God: he brings deliverance when we least expect it. Finish your supper, and then go to bed: your horses shall be well cared for; and if you must needs depart at daybreak to-morrow, they will not go unsed. Drink another cup of wine, worthy trooper," he continued, speaking to Scroope. "It was for such occasions as these that wine was given to man."

"By my faith, good father," answered Scroope, "I think it is for every occasion. I do not know the time or the cir-

circumstances in which wine does not do my heart good: it's the best of all liquors, bating beer. Good barley beer, that some folks call ale, is worth all the other liquors in the world put together."

Ere long, Albert Denyn and the trooper retired to rest, but there were people on foot in the curé's house all night; and he himself returned upon his mule, as from a long ride, at the hour of three in the morning.

"I have been able to get no intelligence, my child," he said to his niece, who was waiting in the passage to receive him. "There is a rumour of a bad man, named Peter Giles, having marched from Paris with some men-at-arms towards the town of Meaux; but whether to attack or defend it, no one could tell. Has the man returned from Beaumont? But that is impossible; he has not had time."

Shortly after, the step of Albert Denyn was heard upon the stairs, and he and Scroope prepared instantly to set out.

"Whither do you turn your steps first, my sons?" asked the curé.

"To Provins, my good father," replied Albert Denyn: "there we part, and one of us goes to Montereau, while the other speeds away towards the frontier."

The old man made no answer, but gave them his benediction and let them depart.

The two horsemen rode on till the middle of the day, but they were then obliged to halt in order to refresh their horses. As soon as the beasts had taken some food they were brought out again; and Albert Denyn had his foot in the stirrup when the sound of a trumpet was heard, and shortly after, over a gentle slope in the road at about the distance of a quarter of a mile, some fluttering pennons and two broad banners were seen rising in the air.

"The capital, as I live!" exclaimed Albert Denyn; "but whose can be that other banner? Or, a pale gules."

"That?" answered Scroope; "why, you should know it better than I do: it is the device of the Count of Foix. I saw it often in Perigueux. It gave us some trouble at times."

Albert Denyn spurred on, and in a minute or two more springing to the ground by the side of the capital's horse. The eagerness of his countenance, and the few first words that he spoke, made the great leader instantly halt his little troop, while the principal persons present gathered round him.

"What news from Paris? What news of this Jacquerie we hear of? What news of the King of Navarre?"

"Bad from all quarters, I fear," replied Albert Denyn.

"The King of Navarre and the dauphin are at open war; the Parisians are in revolt; the Jacques are slaughtering the nobles throughout the land. But, my lord captal," he continued, "I came hither seeking you at full speed. I have an adventure for you, fair sir, which you will not fail to undertake. My good Lord of Mauvinet, with but a handful of men, is shut up in the Castle of Beaumont, some thirty leagues hence, by the Jacques of Brie."

"How many are there against him?" demanded the captal.

"I cannot justly say," answered Albert Denyn: "were they regular troops one might judge, but they are a wild multitude—certainly more than twenty thousand men."

"And we have five-and-thirty men, noble count," replied the captal, turning towards the Count de Foix. "Well, Albert, now tell me two things. How long can the good lord hold out? and is the Lady Adela with him?"

"The count can keep the castle, I should hope, two or three days," replied the young soldier—"a week at the utmost. But we can raise men, my lord. I am sure that from some of the neighbouring castles we can gain assistance. As for the Lady Adela"—and the colour came up into his cheek, while the keen eye of the captal rested firmly upon him—"she is in Meaux, in not much greater safety than her father. The Duchess of Orleans and herself resolved to make their escape from Beaumont, and I with some others were sent to guard them to Meaux, where it was supposed the regent might be found. None of the royal family were there, however, when we arrived, but the Duchess of Normandy, and with her some sixty or seventy of the highest ladies in France, I was told, but scarcely enough men-at-arms to play sentinel on the battlements of the market-place. The citizens are disaffected, it seems; the ladies are terrified at their situation; and I came away with the purpose of either going to Montreau or sending this good fellow to the dauphin, for the purpose of calling him back to Meaux with what troops he may have at his command."

"Better go yourself, Albert," said the captal: "you may gain a high reward, while we raise men and ride on to Beaumont."

"No, my lord," replied Albert; "by your good leave, I will go with you to Beaumont: Scroope, here, can carry the message to the dauphin and win the guerdon."

"Well, then, forward, my good friend," said the captal, addressing Scroope: "do you know the message and the road?"

"Both, both, sir," answered Scroope, passing on; "and I will not miss the reward for want of the spur."

"Come, Albert, with us, then," continued the captal, "and tell us more of those sad events as we go. Will France never be at peace?"

"God forbid that there should be peace for any length of time!" cried the Count de Foix. "War is the occupation of a gentleman; and what should we do, captal, if all the world were to agree to remain slobbering in furred gowns? But as for these Jacques, I have no notion of the villeins taking the trade out of our hands. Plunder is a part of our especial privileges, captal; and we must not let mere peasants share with us."

He spoke laughingly and with a certain degree of sarcastic bitterness; for there was not wanting even in those days, amongst the nobles themselves, a perception of the vices of their social state; although they would sooner have given up life itself than that curious mixture of fierce and gentle, cruel and generous pursuits, which formed the chivalrous occupation of the day.

The captal, without pausing, rode on for about ten miles past the little inn where Albert had stopped to refresh his horses, and at length drew in his rein at a small place called Touquin, intending to pass the night there: it was but a hamlet, but at that time a populous one. The castles of several nobles were seen rising around; the Jacquerie had not as yet infected the peasantry; and besides finding ample accommodation for their men in the cottages around, the captal and the Count de Foix trusted to obtain there such an accession of strength from the castles of Coulommiers, Villeneuve, Rosoy, and from the height near Jouy, which was then crowned by one of the finest châteaux in the country, as to enable them to attempt the relief of Beaumont with some certainty of success.

The evening meal was soon spread; the captal and the count took their places at the head of the table; their followers ranged themselves on either side, keeping due distinction of rank; and with the light-hearted spirit of the day, they laughed, and joked, and drank, as if there were no such things as bloodshed, and murder, and civil contentions in all the world.

"Why, Albert, where got you that string of pearls?" demanded the captal at length. "The gold chain, I know, was the emperor's gift; but that must have been from the hand of some fair lady, surely."

"It was given me, beau sire, by the Duchess of Orleans," replied Albert Denyn, "as a reward for guarding her from Paris to Beaumont; and she moreover promised me, ^{as} I carried it through the midst of the Jacques, to ask knighthood for me from the hand of the dauphin himself."

"There never was anything like his luck," said Bassot de Mauleon, one of the gentlemen attached to the Captal de Buch: "he seems to fall in with every good thing that is going!"

"Because he is always in the saddle to seek them, Bassot," replied the captal. "Why, you might have won the gold chain the emperor gave him, for you set out together; only you staid to make love to a pretty girl in a village on the Danube, and lost the reward."

"But I won the girl," cried Mauleon, "and that was the better of the two. Yet it must be owned he is a lucky man."

"He will be more lucky still before he has done," said the captal.

"Fortune is conduct," observed the Count de Foix. "But I suppose, young gentleman, you look upon yourself as in a state to claim the duchess's promise; for, if I understood you rightly, you guarded her safely to Meaux from Beaumont, when the castle was besieged by the Jacques."

"No, no, my lord," replied Albert Denyn; "such was not her meaning, and I would never dare claim knighthood upon such ground. If I carry the trinket through the villeins, sword in hand, in the open day, it may be considered as something; but our escape from Beaumont was made by secret ways and in the darkness of the night."

"Well," said the captal, "we must not linger long over our food; for with my good-will to-morrow evening shall find us under the walls of Beaumont. We will send messengers immediately to the Lords of Jouy, Villeneuve, and Rosoy; and with the first gleam of light, if they send us any reinforcements, we will be upon our way to deliver my good Lord of Mauvinet. Mauleon, you shall go to Jouy, and beseech the châtelain to give us his company on this —"

"Noble gentlemen," said the aubergiste, entering, "here is a priest without, asking to speak with one of you named Denyn, and if he be not here, with the noble Captal de Buch."

"Why, Albert," cried the captal, "what do you with a priest? Are you going to make confession before you are hanged?"

"Your pardon, noble sirs," urged the aubergiste, "but the good priest is very earnest for instant admission. He says the matter is of life and death."

"Send him in, send him in then," exclaimed the captal; and at the same moment Albert Denyn started up and advanced towards the door. Before he reached it, however, the good priest Dacy entered the room, with a face very pale and a dress soiled with dust and hard riding.

"My son," he said, grasping the young soldier's hand, "you were eager for tidings from Beaumont and from Meaux; I bring you both. Beaumont is well-nigh free; the Jacques have decamped from it, leaving only enough to keep the garrison in. But, alas for Meaux! the mayor and the people have thrown open the gates to the villeins; the rabble of Paris have joined them; they are even now attacking the market-place, where are collected all the noblest ladies of France, almost without defence."

Albert struck his hand against his forehead, forgetting all restraint in the agony of the moment.

"She will be lost! she will be lost!" he exclaimed. "My beautiful! my beloved! and I not there to die for her!"

The powerful hand of the captal was laid upon his shoulder. "Fear not, dear boy," he said; and then turning to the rest, added in a loud voice, "Give my banner to the wind! Every foot into the stirrup! Greilly to the rescue! and shame upon him who will not follow to deliver the ladies of France!"

Albert turned and grasped his hand; but the captal stopped him—"Not a word, not a word!" he cried. "We go to great deeds, Albert, which will make our names immortal whether we live or die. By heaven! my cousin of Foix, I would rather have this opportunity of marching, with five-and-thirty men, to deliver the ladies of France from an army of villeins, than wear the crown of any realm in Christendom. What say you, my men? is not this glorious fortune?"

A shout was the reply; and ere half-an-hour was over the gallant little band was on its way to Meaux.

CHAPTER XL.

THE waiting for deliverance! It is a terrible thing, wherever we put our trust or hope, if that hope be of earth. Ay, it is a terrible thing, even when our hope is from heaven; for unto all of us, from one end of the world to the other, might be addressed the often-repeated reproach of the Redeemer, that we are of but little faith. However strong may be our conviction of God's mercy and tenderness, of his unwillingness to punish, of his readiness to forgive, of the omniscience of his wisdom and the omnipotence of his power, the weak spirit of man will still tremble, and doubt, and fear; will shrink from each painful trial, whatever be the object, and think the deliverance long and tardy, even while he continues to hope that it will come. But how often is it with us that hope itself goes out; that looking round, and calculating all the chances and probabilities of human aid, we see none on any side; that all assistance from any being on the earth seems impossible, and blasphemous fear even whispers a doubt that God himself can help us!

The situation of those within the market-place of Meaux might well produce in their minds the utmost pitch of despair, when, on the night after Albert Denyn had left them, they heard the shouts of the wild and furious multitude that poured down to the banks of the Marne, and when they saw rising up through the country round the flames of houses, and cottages, and hamlets, mingling with the blaze of watch-fires and the glare of torches. It was by these terrible signs they first learned that the Jacques were under the walls of Meaux.

Little sleep had any one that night, though many there present needed it greatly; and by those on the battlements could be heard, till a late hour, the shrieks and cries, as well as the sounds of revelry and rude merriment, which rose up from the fields round the city. In the mean while, within the walls of the market-place, circulated the report that the mayor, whose faith had been long doubtful, had promised

admission to the enemy; and the communication which they held with those in the town, little as it was, soon confirmed the tidings. Many were the anxious consultations, many the fruitless inquiries as to when the message could reach the dauphin, and as to how long the place could be held out; many the bitter murmurings and keen reproaches with which they loaded the name of Soulas, the treacherous mayor of Meaux, and the faithless citizens to whose courage and truth the ladies of France had been committed. Often, too, during the night, some timid girl, who at any other time would have feared to set her foot at that hour beyond the precincts of her paternal dwelling, stole up to the unguarded battlements to listen for the sounds that she dreaded to hear, and scan the darkness with an eager eye, lest the ruffians by whom she was surrounded should take advantage of the obscurity to steal upon them unperceived.

But of all within those walls there was none so sad, there was none so apprehensive, as poor Adela de Mauvinet; for she had not alone to ask herself what might be her own fate the next moment, but she had bitterly to inquire, without the power of obtaining any certain answer, what might be the condition of her beloved father at that very time. Would the multitude of Jacquerie have quitted Beaumont, she asked herself, without having taken the castle? and as her heart replied to the question but too sadly, tears as for the dead rolled over her fair cheeks.

There were but two other beings on earth to whom she was attached—her young brother and Albert Denyn. That the former was safe, she thanked God; but as she did so, she added in her own mind, "I shall never behold him more." It must be owned, however, that it was to the companion of her childhood, the friend of her youth, her deliverer from danger and from worse than death—her lover, her best beloved—that her thoughts turned most eagerly. What would be his feelings, she asked, when he returned to Meaux, and found the place of their refuge in the power of the unsparing, sanguinary, barbarous multitude? what would be his anguish when he learned that she had fallen into the brutal hands of him from whom he had once saved her, and when he could not know to what horrors she might be subjected before death delivered her?

She thought of him, and she grieved for his agony; but Adela judged, and judged rightly, that Albert would not long survive her; and something like hope and joy sprang up again in her mind as she said to herself, "It was impossible we ever

could be united on earth; but now, though our bridal be a bloody one, we shall soon be united in heaven."

From time to time, too, the contemplation of her own fate pressed heavily upon her. "What would she herself do?" she asked. "How should she herself act? Was she bound by any religious tie to suffer dishonour rather than to seek death?" and she tried to call up again to memory all that she knew of the Word of Truth, in order to gain some rule for her conduct, and to justify, if possible, to her own mind, the last terrible act of maiden purity. The legends of her church supplied her with manifold examples of such conduct; but still she shrunk from the idea of suicide. "Would they but kill me!" she thought, "would they but kill me! Yet surely woman, though she be weak, has a right to defend herself to the last. There are not men enough to guard the walls, or to protect us and themselves, if the villeins break in. Why should we not take what arms we can get? Why should we not aid to defend ourselves? Why should we not, as a last resource, drive them to slay us, by resistance even unto death? Then the whole sin and crime would be theirs; we should die unpolluted, and the weight of the murder would rest heavy upon them."

To a night of agitation and fear succeeded a day of terror and dismay. The young Duchess of Normandy and her companions gathered themselves together in the midst of the market-place, not so much to consult as to lament; and the dark and anxious countenances of the few men who were with them—countenances in which there was no hope—served but to dispirit them the more. Each told the others how she had spent the hours, the sad thoughts, the fearful visions, the dark imaginations that had possessed them.

There was not a word of courage or energy amongst them till Adela related what had been passing in her mind; and it was strange to hear that sweet and gentle voice proposing high deeds to women like herself, in defence of their honour and their purity; and to see the fair and beautiful beings around her roused into ardour and eagerness by her example, and with renewed courage seeking for those arms which their hands were but little accustomed to wield.

"We can but die," they exclaimed; "we can but die; and it is better to die by any other hands than our own."

A faint sad smile came over the countenance of the young Lord of Chamblé as he heard their determination.

"I never thought to fall," he said, "with such fair companions in arms; but I fear we can make no great resistance,

and my fate will be soon decided. If, therefore, you are determined upon your conduct—and I cannot but applaud the purpose—take the lightest weapons that you can get. I saw some cross-bows, with which the pages learn to aim their quarrels; these, with daggers, and short swords, and knives, very weak hands can use; and as what you seek is, alas! but death in the end, you may well draw it down upon your heads from the enemy, if you employ such arms with determination."

While he was yet speaking, a messenger came to call him to the gate tower; and after a few minutes' absence, he returned saying, "I know not what these treacherous commons are doing. They are laying out tables in the streets, as if for some great festival."

The matter was speedily explained, however. The sight of the Jacques pouring in soon brought all the men-at-arms to the walls. The pages joined them to make the greater show; and to the honour of those within the market-place of Meaux let it be remembered, that not the lowest person there present—not the serving-man, who never raised his ambition higher than perhaps to groom the horse of the knight, where he before groomed the horse of the squire—who did not now swear to die willingly for the ladies of France, and to spend the last drop of his blood to protect them.

Anxiously the women remained behind, with sinking hearts and trembling limbs, but still resolved and prepared. The suspense, however, proved too much for endurance; and at the end of an hour, one of the boldest ventured up to the top of the wall to ascertain what was taking place.

"They seem to be constructing a machine for battering down the gates," said the Lord of Chamblé, in reply to her questions. "If so, it must be to-morrow or the next day before they begin the attack."

"Thank God! thank God!" cried the lady; "then we may yet be saved."

"Montreau is far off," answered the Lord of Chamblé, sadly. "The messenger knew not that the danger was so pressing; the dauphin, I find, had but three hundred men with him, and there are many thousands within sight of this gate: not only the villain peasants, but men-at-arms, I see, with banners—probably the commons of Paris. Take not hold of a foolish hope, lady: I feel upon my heart that weight which tells me we are to die here, and soon."

During the rest of the day, after this brief conversation, pages were sent down from time to time to tell the princesses

and their companions what was taking place in the town, as far as those on the gate tower could discover; but the delay of the attack was an aggravation rather than a relief. It wore out and exhausted the energies of the hearts within those walls; it made the interval like the agony of a prolonged death; and by the time that night came, there was more than one of the ladies there present who proposed not to wait for the attack, but to destroy themselves together and at once. Some, however, clung to the last hope of life, and their voices prevailed to stay the rash act.

Towards sunset, the young Lord of Chamblé came down for a few moments to take some refreshment; and when the Duchess of Normandy asked him at what time he thought the attack would commence, he replied, "Early to-morrow morning, lady, if not during the darkness. The engine they are making has been constructed with incredible rapidity; and a few hours more of daylight will enable them to complete it, even if they do not go on by torchlight. We must remain upon the walls all night, and show lights here and there, to deceive them: they evidently think that we are ten times more numerous than we are, otherwise they would have scaled the walls at twenty points long ere this."

"Had we not better, then, spread round the battlements ourselves," said the Duchess of Normandy, "and keep up fires and carry torches during the night? They cannot see whether we are men or women; and if we can but intimidate them for a time, my husband may come up."

"You can do so if you please," replied the young knight sadly; "but some of you had better sleep while some keep the walls. Then, as to to-morrow, if you still hold your resolution, and think there is no chance of these men sparing you, when I go up to the tower I will order the small gate in the palisade behind to be fastened up. There is no need for us to leave ourselves a retreat; and you will have then some defence, which will oblige them to ——"

"Butcher us without dishonouring us, you would say, my lord," added the Duchess of Orleans, as the young knight left the sentence unfinished. "Well, dear niece, you and I will be captains of the two bands who watch the walls, and rest by turns. As I am brave, I will have some coward for my lieutenant; and as you are cowardly, you shall have our sweet Adela for yours, for she comes of a brave race."

There is nothing so sad as when mirth mingles with misery, and the tears rose in the young duchess's eyes as she heard her fair relation's words. The night, however, passed as had

been appointed; and throughout those hours of darkness bands of noble ladies and fair girls patrolled the beleaguered walls, armed with such light weapons as they could wield, and trembling as they went.

The Duchess of Normandy had returned to the house she inhabited when daylight began to dawn; and looking up, she said to Adela de Mauvinet, who was lying at her feet, "I wish, dear girl, you would go to the walls and look out on the road that leads towards Fontenoy. Perhaps the dauphin may be coming. God of heaven! this is very terrible, not to know that one has half-an-hour to live! Take some one with you and go, Adela."

"I fear not! I will go alone, madam," replied the young Lady of Mauvinet. "Look how yon poor thing is sleeping, quite worn out: it were barbarous to awake her. I will go alone."

As she went, however, she found a young waiting-woman of the duchess sitting weeping bitterly on the stairs, who, when she heard whither she was going, said, "Let me go with you, lady, as far as the stairs up to the wall. I dare not show my head above in the daylight, for fear they should shoot me with an arrow."

"Come as far as you will, and no farther," replied Adela. "Would to God they would shoot me with an arrow! It would find no hope in my heart to quell."

They soon reached the foot of the wall and mounted the steps, the poor girl following till she was within a few feet of the top. There, however, the young lady left her, and going on, soon obtained a view over the fields around. The side to which she had been told to direct her attention was that which, looking over the meadow we have before mentioned, turned towards the south, where the bend of the river Marne, with the canal which insulated the market-place, could be clearly discerned, as well as a little sloping field beyond, and then some undulating country stretching away towards Couilly.

Adela gazed out with even more than the eager anxiety of the sister in the fairy tale, but nothing did she see except the fair face of nature. She turned her eyes towards the town; but the great mass of the market-place lay between her and the bridge, and she could behold nothing in that direction either.

"If we had but a boat," she thought, "we might ferry over into those fields, and perhaps escape;" but then she remarked, some way up, by the side of the canal, at a spot

which must have been visible from many parts of the town, some two or three hundred of the Jacques lolling idly about as if upon the watch, and she added to herself, "They would catch us ere we could fly."

At that moment a sort of rushing sound, and then a dull, heavy noise, as if a violent blow were struck upon some large hollow surface, met her ear, and made her clasp her hands with terror.

"Run, run!" she exclaimed to the girl who was upon the steps. "Run and ask what that sound is, and come back and let me know."

The girl was away, and returned in a minute, with a face still paler than before, and her teeth chattering in her head with fear.

"The attack has begun!" she said—"the attack has begun! That was a stone as big as one of these in the wall cast against the gates by the mangonel they have made."

"Now were the time to die," said Adela to herself, looking at a dagger which Albert Denyn had given her—"now were the time to die."

"Oh, look out, look out!" exclaimed the girl, wringing her hands. "Is there no hope? Is there no help?"

Adela turned her faint eyes over the prospect towards Fontenoy, and was silent. The next instant she uttered a loud shriek, but it was a shriek of joy.

"Yes, yes!" she cried—"it is—it must be a banner that is rising over the hill! Yes, there it is, full! A banner! a banner! The Captal de Buch! the Captal de Buch! Another, too—or, a pale gules!—the Count of Foix! Spears, spears coming up over the hill! Run, tell the princess, girl! Tell the poor Lady of St Leu, too! Shout it up to them upon the gate tower. Bid them fight for their honour. Say help is at hand. Run, girl, run! Who is this first, that comes spurring on like fire? Albert, as I live! my own dear Albert! bearing the captal's banner, too!"

"Where are they? where are they?" cried the voice of the Duchess of Normandy, rushing with her hair all dishevelled to the battlements, followed by a number of others. "Where are our deliverers? Alas! they are very few. They must be but the advance. Still, still they will enable us to keep the place till the dauphin comes. But how are they to pass? There is no bridge—there is no boat. How will they pass? oh! how will they pass?"

Adela made no reply. Her eyes, her heart, her soul, were fixed upon the banner of the Captal de Buch and him who

bore it. Right onward he rode like lightning down the slope, towards the spot where the canal was cut from the Marne, and where the current, being somewhat diverted, was consequently not so strong. No pause, no hesitation was seen; but waving the banner over his head as he approached the stream, he struck the rowels of his spurs deep into his horse's sides, and plunged down the bank into the water. Loaded with heavy armour, horse and man for a moment well-high disappeared in the tide; but the banner still waved in the air, and the next instant charger and rider rose up and came rapidly towards the meadow. The distance was but small; and ere the rest of the horsemen reached the bank, the fore-feet of Albert Denyn's steed were striking the firm ground on the other side. The captal and the Count of Foix plunged in the first; then came the banner-bearer of the count, and then, man by man, the gentlemen of their train.

"Throw open the postern on the meadow!" cried the duchess. "Run and tell our dear Lady of Orleans. Come, let us greet our deliverers."

"Look, look!" exclaimed Adela—"yon poor fellow is off his horse. Help him, good God! he will be drowned! No, no—the gallant captal has got him by the hand. He is safe! he is safe!"

With gladly-beating hearts, and brains well-nigh bewildered by renewed hope, that bevy of fair girls ran down the steps to meet the noble gentlemen and their train who came to fight in their defence. They found the postern gate open, and the Duchess of Orleans and a number of other ladies already there. The captal had sprung from his horse and was leading him by the rein, speaking as he came to Albert Denyn, who had also dismounted, as was likewise the case with the Count of Foix and several others.

"By my honour, Albert," said the captal, "these brave fellows may well accuse me of having a favourite now. In letting you lead through that river, I have done for you what I would not do for any other man on earth; and yet you are so ungrateful that you are going to take from me what I once coveted more than a monarch's crown."

Gaiety and sadness were mingled in the leader's tone; but the voice of Albert Denyn was all sad, as he answered, "My lord, my lord, do not make me remember too bitterly, that I was once a serf."

"Well, well," replied the captal, "I will soon give you an opportunity of doing great deeds, my friend. Martin, see that the horses be fed instantly, and if any fresh ones can be had

in the place, bring them all forth. Cousin of Foix, is not this our fair Princess of Normandy? Lady, by your leave, I kiss your sweet hand, and upon this fair book I swear, that, although I have but too often drawn my harsh sword against your husband and his friends, it shall to-day achieve your deliverance, or John de Greilly shall sleep this night in death. Lady of Orleans, I know you well. Lo! here stands a good knight of Foix for your defence. Sweet Adela de Mauvinet! I bring you good tidings—your father is quite safe. But whom shall I give you for your champion? My young hero here, good Albert Denyn, who certainly has borne my banner this day through fields I never thought to see it cross. Ladies dear, for the rest of you, on my life you are so many and we so few, you must e'en share the rest of us amongst you; but, nevertheless, I trust that one good man-at-arms will show himself able this day to defend four ladies against at least a hundred Jacques."

"Alas! my lord," said the Duchess of Normandy, "speak not of it so lightly: you are very, very few, and you know not the numbers that are opposed to you. We hoped that you but led the advanced party of a larger force. There are very many thousands in the town of Meaux and the neighbouring fields. They are even now attacking the gate. Hark! the engine has dashed another stone against it."

"Fear not, lady! fear not!" answered the captal. "By my life and by my honour, there is not a doubt or an apprehension in my mind that these few hands which you see around you are quite sufficient to scatter yon base rabble to the winds of heaven, and give their carcasses to the ravens. Some two miles hence, I have seen a sight which has filled my spirit with a fire that burns for the destruction of these men, who have not only cast off a yoke which was perhaps a heavy one, but have cast off also every feeling of humanity, and by deeds of blood and horror, and infernally-devised cruelty, have shown themselves unworthy of any state but that against which they have risen. But whom have we here?"

"My Lord of Chamblé," said the Count of Foix, who had been speaking to the Duchess of Orleans, and now advanced towards the gentleman who approached, "how goes it with you? But badly, I fear. However, we have come to give you help, and we will soon, please God and our Lady, set this affair to rights."

The tone of confidence in which the captal and the Count of Foix spoke, as well as the very fact of receiving assistance at all, at a moment when it seemed beyond all expectation,

had restored, in some degree, lost hope and comfort to the breasts of the ladies of France; but such was not the effect upon the young Lord of Chamblé, when he beheld the scanty numbers which followed the two leaders, and remembered the immense multitude he had lately had before his eyes.

"There may now be some chance, my lord," he said, "of repelling these villains and defending the place; for even your small force will enable us to man the walls and to repair what evil is done to the gates; but as for deliverance, I fear we must wait till the regent arrives."

"Small force!" exclaimed the Count of Foix, with a gay and cheerful laugh. "Why, my friend, do you not see we have an army? Is not this the Captal de Buch standing here? to say nothing of the poor Count of Foix; and as for the rest, were you to ask any of the gentlemen ranged in that band, whether for half a kingdom he would have its numbers tripled, I tell you he would say, No! So greedy are we of the glory of this day, that you may think yourself lucky, Monsieur de Chamblé, if we let you share in it."

"Please God, my lords," replied the young nobleman, "what you share I will share; but tell me, what is it that you intend to do? for I see nothing that can be done."

"You ask what we will do," said the Captal de Buch, taking a step forward, and speaking in a calm, determined tone. "This, my noble lord:—With God's pleasure and these ladies' favour, as soon as our horses are fed or we can procure fresh ones, we will throw open yonder gates, give our banners to the wind, clear the bridge we saw as we came down of the enemy, and smite the base knaves as long as there is one of them or us left living. This is our purpose; and it shall never be said that we suffered ourselves to be here cooped up, trusting to stone walls for defence against the scum of France. I declare before heaven, that would no one else go with me, I would myself set out with my lance in my hand and ride them down. Who will refuse to do the same?"

"Not I!" "Not I!" "Not I!" cried all the voices round.

"Nor I, my lord," replied the young Lord of Chamblé; "but——" and he glanced his eye over the group of ladies who stood near.

"Doubt not! doubt not!" exclaimed the Count of Foix. "Ladies, do you trust us?"

"Ay, my lord!" answered the Duchess of Orleans. "Were they ten times as many, we would rely on you as if you were a host. As for horses, there are plenty: had we had men to mount them, we might have been delivered long ago."

"Quick, then! Let them be brought forth!" exclaimed the Capital de Buch. "Put our caparisons on them: they are somewhat wet with the water of the river, but we will soon dry them in the fire of the battle. Ladies fair, if we deliver you this day, as we trust right certainly to do, I pray you remember, whether I live or fall, it is to this young gentleman here present, as much as to any one, that you owe your safety."

"I, for one, do owe him much already, my lord," said a pale but beautiful girl, taking a step forward. "He generously tried to save my dying father, when delay might have been worse than death to himself. But that father, noble capital, commanded me strictly, the very first moment I could gain speech with you, to give you this packet and beg you to see right done. I will explain hereafter everything concerning it, but I must not fail to obey his words. Here is the packet."

The capital took it, saying with a smile, "I must not stay to read it now, fair lady, for there are some skilful hands plying a mangonel against the gates, I hear. Lo! here are the horses. Cousin, take you your choice: the grey? Well, give me the black one then. Brace up those girths tighter, good youth. How the brute plunges! he has not been forth for many a day. We will take down that fire before we have done. Albert, you shall be my squire, and win the spurs you talked of. Mauleon, come you on the other side. Cousin of Foix, let us make our front as wide as the gate will admit. Bring down any men-at-arms that can be had from the tower, and let the varlets twang the bowstring eagerly upon the enemy till we be past the bridge. Fair ladies, adieu! Close well the gates behind us, and then watch us from the walls. Your bright eyes will give us a thousand hearts. Down with your visor, Albert!"

"I would fain that he should know me, my lord," replied Albert Denyn.

"Ha!" said the capital. "Well, as you will. Now let our trumpet sound to the charge. Open the doors, and on them!"

The gates of the market-place were suddenly thrown back; and through the archway might be seen the line of the bridge over the Marne, with but very few men upon it; but beyond it appeared a sea of fierce and furious faces, turned up towards the walls from the large open space on the other side of the river. A great part of the multitude were but rudely armed, with pikes, bills, or scythes; but amongst them, too,

were men covered from head to foot with armour; and banners and standards were likewise displayed in their ranks, whilst in the midst the huge mangonel was seen, in the act of heaving another immense stone into the air.

"Halt!" cried the captal; "halt till it has fallen. Now on them!—charge! Greilly to the rescue! St. George for merry England!"

"Foix! Foix! St. Michael and St. George! St. Michael and St. George!" cried the Count of Foix; and dashing their spurs into their horse's flanks, they galloped through the archway, the proud beasts that bore them plunging fiercely as if to escape from the rein.

The news of a reinforcement having thrown itself into the market-place had reached the multitudes of the Jacquerie a few minutes before, and had somewhat shaken their confidence; but when they saw the gates thrown open and banners and spears coming forth, many hearts, not knowing the scanty numbers of their adversaries, began to quail ere the first horsemen were upon the bridge.

A movement of flight instantly took place. In vain Caillet tried to rally the multitude; in vain the Parisians and a number of his own determined followers made a fierce stand to oppose the passage of the fugitives. As man after man poured forth from the narrow archway and thundered along the bridge, and as the arrows from the gate fell amongst them, wounding many and killing one or two, the effort for flight became general, and every street leading from the bridge was jammed up with people.

Mad, furious, and despairing, Caillet seized a crossbow from one of the men near him, saying, "I will show you how to treat the vipers!" and aiming a quarrel at the Captal de Buch, he loosed the string. The missile flew off with a hissing sound, but the pressure of the people had shaken the marksman's aim. The captal rode on unharmed, piercing at the very moment the back of one of the fugitives with his keen lance; but the Lord of Chamblé wavered in the saddle, dropped the reins, fell, and was dragged by a page from under the horse's feet.

The young noble uttered no sound; but the man whom the captal transfixcd with his lance gave a sudden yell of agony that spread new consternation amongst the people. Caillet, Jacques Morne, Vaillant, Soulas, and the rest, were borne away in spite of all their efforts; and urging on their horses fiercely through the streets, the men-at-arms, some with their lances and some with their long swords, pierced, and cut down, or trampled under foot, the immense multitude who had so

lately been attacking the fortified market-place of Meaux, but who, now smitten with an inconceivable panic, fled before less than a score and a-half of men. They pressed each other to death in the narrow streets, trod without mercy upon every one that fell, and at once terrifying and slaying each other, issued forth into the fields and meadows round Meaux, fleeing in every direction, but fleeing in vain. Wherever they turned, wherever a group gathered together, there the fierce band of the pursuers was upon them, hewing them down, and giving no ear to the cries and entreaties of those who had never listened to pity in their own hour of power.

From seven o'clock in the morning till nearly three in the afternoon, the band of the Captal d. Buch and the Count of Foix continued to slay the Jacques and their accomplices; and, however marvellous it may appear, no fact of history is more clearly ascertained than that, either pressed to death in the narrow streets, or killed by the sword in the city and the fields around, seven thousand men died that day under the weapons of less than forty.

Very early in the fight, or rather slaughter, the little band of the captal and the Count of Foix had divided into five separate parties; and when, about three o'clock, the former planted his banner upon a small hill and looked over the plains around, he could see his horsemen wheeling hither and thither, but no body of the insurgents was to be seen in any direction.

He then ordered his trumpet to sound a recal; and he was shortly after rejoined by the Count of Foix, who sprang from his horse and cast himself down upon the turf, saying, "On my life, captal, though I have seen many hard-fought days, and hunted many a wild beast from morning until nightfall, I never remember having been so weary in all my life. Why, till the last hour, my arm has not ceased slaying for a minute. Never let them talk of Samson after this day's work. I wish my sword had been the jaw-bone of an ass—it would have been easier wielded. How many thousand did you kill, captal? Ho, Raoul! take off my casque and let me have a little air."

"I slew till I was sick of the bloody work," replied the captal. "It was mere butchery; and on my life I think I should have sheathed my sword and let them go free, had not the tale of that poor dying wretch we found last night—how that they had roasted her husband's body before her eyes and made her eat part of it—rung in my ears, and rendered me as merciless as the north-east wind. I have no taste for killing sheep."

"Nor I either," answered the Count of Foix; "and, to say

truth, I had but one fair stroke or two with any man—one of the Parisian fellows, I imagine, who, finding me close upon him, turned and aimed a blow at my thigh. He had good arms, for my lance broke on his plastron, and it took me two good thrusts of my sword, which is heavy enough, to end him."

"Albert Denyn had the best of the day, my lords," said Mauleon, joining in; "for he attached himself to the man in the black armour, who was worth the whole of the rest of them put together. Albert touched no one else but him, except when people came between them, and then he cut his way through, as a ship cleaves the sea."

"That was Caillet!" exclaimed the Captal de Buch: "that was their leader. Albert vowed himself to his destruction. Did he kill him?"

"Not that I saw, my lord," replied Mauleon. "Just out of the town gates, that fellow, and four or five others who were with him, found horses; but there the black armour turned upon Albert, and they had two or three stout blows together. Then the other put the spur to his horse and galloped, and Albert after him. More than once they came to blows; for ever and anon the black armour faced round upon his pursuer, sometimes alone, sometimes with two others; but still Albert made his part good; for I saw him cleave one of them, who had no head-piece, down to the very jaws, and then wheel upon the others again. After that I followed you, my lord, and saw no more."

"Let the trumpet sound!" said the captal: "they are coming in but slowly."

"They are weary to death, I dare say," replied the Count of Foix; "but let us be riding back towards Meaux—there will be bright eyes looking out for us. I think we have lost none of our number but one who was shot by a quarrel on the bridge. Who was he? I saw some one fall, but did not mark who it was."

"It was the young gentleman we found in the place, my lord," answered one of the men-at-arms. "Monsieur de Chamblé I think they called him."

"Indeed!" cried the count. "Poor fellow! Was he killed?"

"As dead as a roebuck," replied the man. "He was raising his visor just at the moment, and it went into his forehead."

"Well, some one must be killed," said the count, and with this brief elegy the subject was dismissed.

The Count of Foix mounted his horse again, and with their

trumpet sounding he and the captal took their way back towards Meaux. As they rode on, party after party came in and joined them; and before they reached the gates of the city, no one was wanting but one or two pages and varlets, who were known to have returned to the market-place with some prisoners, the young Lord of Chamblé, and Albert Denyn.

An unexpected obstacle, however, presented itself under the very walls. Some of the citizens appeared upon the battlements, and threatened to keep the gates closed unless a promise of amnesty were given for the part that the people of Meaux had taken. The cheek of the captal turned very red; but the Count of Foix, remarking that the great valves of the gate did not seem fully closed, spurred forward and pushed them hard with his hand.

The door gave way, in spite of some resistance that was made. The men-at-arms rushed in, and were joined by a part of the citizens, crying, "Down with the traitors! down with the traitors! Long live the dauphin! long live the dauphin!" and in a moment the scene of strife was renewed in the streets of the city.

Worsted but desperate, some of the mayor's party fled into the houses, and opened a discharge of arrows and quarrels from the windows, drawing down a bitter retribution on their own heads.

"Out upon the traitorous hounds!" exclaimed the Captal de Buch.

"Burn them out!" cried the Count of Foix.

The suggestion was rapidly adopted: fire was brought; and ere an hour was over, one-half of the town of Meaux was in flames. In one of the houses was taken John Soulas, the treacherous mayor; and some of the other citizens would have put him to death at once for the evils that he had brought upon the city; but the captal and the Count of Foix interfered, and, tying him hand and foot, had him carried with them into the market-place to await the judgment of the dauphin.

In the midst of that small square, where, not many hours before, they had stood expecting death with all the most aggravating circumstances, the ladies of France were now collected to welcome the little band of their gallant deliverers. Two by two, as they passed the gates, the nobles and their men-at-arms, leaving their exhausted horses panting in the shade, advanced to meet the gratulations that poured upon them.

All was joy and satisfaction in every bosom but one there present. Adela de Mauvinet gazed over the returning band as they advanced, and searched amongst them, with an eager and an anxious eye, for the one being most dear to her own heart. She saw him not. She counted them over again and again: he was not there; and as she stood by the side of the Duchess of Orleans, who was pouring forth thanks with an eloquent voice, Adela sank slowly down, and was caught in the arms of the young Lady of St. Leu, hearing not the words which the latter addressed to her: "He is safe—I am sure he is safe!"

CHAPTER XLI.

WE must now not only change the scene to a camp at some distance from Meaux, but pass over at once seven days in the course of our history.

In the centre of the long rows of canvas streets was a large open space before a royal pavilion, with the standard of France upon the right hand and another banner upon the left. On either side appeared a long rank of men-at-arms; and the curtain of the tent, drawn up, displayed a young and somewhat pallid man, seated in a large chair of state; while round about him, and back to the very crimson hangings behind, appeared a crowd of noblemen and gentlemen, for the most part armed completely except the head.

Placed in a somewhat lower chair, by the side of the principal personage, was the young Duchess of Normandy; and next to her again the Duchess of Orleans. A number of ladies stood behind and around them; and though all more or less were dressed with such splendour as befits a court, it was sad to see that many were in the weeds of mourning.

On the right of the dauphin, a little in advance, was a group composed of the most distinguished men in France; and amongst them were to be seen the Count of Foix, the Bêgue de Vilaine, the Captal de Buch, and the old Lord of Mauvinet — last, as the poet says, but not least; for he was standing next to the prince himself, with his arms crossed upon his chest, his grey hair escaping from under his velvet cap, and his eyes bent thoughtfully, but not sadly, upon the ground.

Near the Duchess of Orleans appeared Adela de Mauvinet, somewhat pale, but with a fluttering colour upon her cheek, which came and went at almost every word; and though her eyes were generally bent on the ground, yet from time to time she raised them to a considerable group of persons who had been brought into the presence of the regent by two heralds. One of the party had been speaking to the Duke of Normandy for a considerable time; and when he came to the

end of their communication, the prince bowed his head, saying, "Monsieur de Picquigny, greet well for us our noble cousin of Navarre, and tell him that there is nothing we desire more than peace with him and all the world. As soon as he gives us such proof and assurance of his good intentions towards ourselves as may prove satisfactory to us and to our council, we will gladly believe his professions, sheath the sword, and take him to our bosom with brotherly love. In the mean time, we readily consent to meet him at our father's royal mansion at St. Ouen; and pledge him our word, in presence of these noble gentlemen, that he shall be safe in person, and have liberty to come and go, without stop or hindrance, for two days before and after our interview. Let him name the day."

"I humbly thank your highness," said the personage who had spoken on behalf of the King of Navarre; "and I beg to present to you, according to your desire, the young gentleman who with his own hand took that traitorous villain, William Caillet, after pursuing him for two days, in the fields near Clermont. I myself it was who found him bleeding and exhausted, and demanded his prisoner at his hands on behalf of the King of Navarre."

"And so the king struck off his head," added the dauphin; "it was too much honour for a villain like that. He should have hanged him to a tree. However, we thank the noble king for the good service he has rendered France, in exterminating the remainder of these Jacques near Clermont. Young gentleman, stand forward: I find that you have done right well and gallantly; but tell me something more of the means by which you accomplished what has foiled so many experienced knights. How did you contrive to take this villain?"

"I pursued him, your highness," replied Albert Denyn, "from Meaux to Nanteuil, and there lost sight of him during the night. But I knew he could not go far, for he had often turned upon me and was badly wounded. The other man who was with him was wounded, too; one I killed under the walls of Meaux. At daybreak, however, after sleeping in the fields, I caught sight of them again, pursued, and overtook them beyond Senlis. There they turned again; and after a few strokes, Caillet's companion, Morne, was killed. The two who remained alive were both much hurt and had lost some blood; but though he was weaker and had suffered more, he would have continued the fight; but some horsemen appeared afar off, and he fled again. I pursued once more,

but my horse was weary, and could hardly carry me farther, when, after a long chase, I found my enemy dropped from his beast, unable to go on. We had been friends in boyhood, and I could not kill him in cold blood; so I bound him and gave him up to Monsieur de Picquigny who followed."

"And for the capture of this notorious malefactor what do you claim as your reward?" demanded the regent. "Knight-hood, doubtless; so kneel down."

Albert Denyn knelt at the feet of the prince, with his face glowing up to the very brow, on which were the scars of more than one fresh wound. Ere he could answer, however, the Duchess of Orleans rose, and laying her hand playfully on the string of pearls which Albert wore twisted through the gold chain round his neck, she said, "By this sign and token I redeem my promise. Charles, your highness must seek some other recompense: I promised, if he bore this trinket through the hosts of the Jacquerie, to demand knight-hood for him of yourself, or of any other knight who for my love and his merit would bestow it."

"Well, then," replied the dauphin, "I grant it to your suit, fair lady, and dub him even now. He shall buckle on the spurs hereafter. In the name of God, St. Michael, and St. George, I dub thee knight;" and he laid his sword upon Albert Denyn's shoulder, adding, "This is for that lady's sake. What other guerdon do you demand of me for your good service done?"

Still, ere Albert could reply, he was again interrupted. The Captal de Buch stepped forward, saying, "Your highness promised that, as soon as you had given an answer to the King of Navarre, you would grant me a boon. I have yielded to a lady, but can yield to no one else."

"Well, what is it?" demanded the dauphin, looking round with a smile.

"I have told your highness," replied the captal.

"Oh; yes! I remember," said the dauphin. "Know all men by these presents, that I revoke and annul the sentence of high treason which went forth against the Lord of Granville, some fourteen or fifteen years ago; restore to his heirs and race their honours, dignities, and possessions, of all kinds whatsoever, and pronounce the said sentence of no effect, and as if it never had been. Let letters of abolition be drawn up," he added, turning to an officer behind. "I perform this act, my lord captal, with the greatest pleasure, as I myself can bear witness that my father erred, and that the noble gentleman he did to death was wholly innocent."

"I give your highness thanks," exclaimed the Count of Mauvinet, stepping forward; "for though we had not met for years before his death, he was my dearest friend."

"I thank your highness also," said the young Lady of St. Leu, "for he was my poor mother's brother."

"Well, now, your boon, young gentleman?" asked the dauphin: "we must not keep you kneeling here all day."

Albert Denyn turned first pale and next red, and then, rising from his knee, bowed low and took a step back.

"I have none to ask, your highness," he replied—"I have obtained more than I either expected or asked. There is but one thing farther in all the earth that I could desire; but it is so much beyond all hope, as well as beyond my worthiness, that I might well be accused of daring presumption were I to dream of it. For an instant it may have crossed my mind, but I now banish it for ever, and I neither can nor will utter it to any one."

"Then I will for you," said the Captal de Buch. "My Lord of Mauvinet, it is you alone who can give him his guerdon. The boon he would ask if he dared is this lady's fair hand;" and crossing over, he took that of Adela in his. She trembled violently; and the Count de Mauvinet stood silent, with no expression of surprise on his countenance, but with a flushed cheek, a downcast eye, a quivering lip, and all those signs which may best denote a fierce mental struggle going on within.

"My lord," continued the Captal de Buch, "remember all that this young man has been to her, all that he has done for her; think that he has been as a brother in her infancy and youth; think that he has been her protector in his manhood; think that he has defended her honour and her life; think that he has spilt his blood as freely as if it had been water, to save her from death and shame! My lord, we know that many a born villain has won the hand of a noble lady by the mere force of riches—at least, so says many an old song. Now, my lord, his riches are of a nobler kind than ever were brought to barter yet; and, moreover, he has been ennobled by the hand of the emperor, knighted by the hand of the regent."

"Cease, my good lord; pray cease! It is in vain," cried Albert Denyn: "the original taint is there, and cannot be removed."

But the Captal de Buch went on without heeding him. "Fair lady," he said, turning to Adela, "I know not well what are your feelings; and therefore to you too I will plead for my young friend. The time was when I coveted no gift

on earth so much as this fair hand. I thought it was a prize for which kings might strive: I deemed that few on the earth were worthy of it. Forgive me, lady, if I say that he is worthy, at least as much as man can be, in services rendered, in noble deeds of arms, in generous courage, and in a lofty spirit. I, John de Gailly, have been held no mean judge of such things; and by my honour and my chivalry, I speak the truth when I say, that were you my own child, were you my own sister, I would give you to him. What say you, my Lord of Mauvinet? Remember what he has done for your child, remember what he has done for you, and above all, remember what he has done for France. Then, if you can lay your finger upon a nobler youth in all this presence, refuse him your daughter's hand."

"But does he ask it?" inquired the Lord of Mauvinet.

"I dare not ask it, my lord," replied Albert Denyn. "Were it possible for me to do so, I would dispute it with a world."

"Well," said the old nobleman, at length—"well, Albert, one ought rightly to be assured that the blood is noble which is permitted to mingle with the race of Mauvinet. Nevertheless, you have indeed done things that may well prove you of gentle race. If my child loves you, I will not say you nay. Adela, decide for yourself, now and for ever. Your hand might be a boon for the highest and noblest in France; station, and rank, and honour, might well be yours—and may still be yours. But if your heart tells you that he has won you well—if you can choose him, and never regret your choice—why, then, now let it be made."

Adela sprang forward, knelt at her father's feet, and held out her hand to Albert Denyn.

"Out of all the world!" she exclaimed, with a burst of strong feeling that nothing could restrain—"out of all the world! Would that the emperor had not ennobled him!—would that the sword of knighthood had never touched his shoulder!—that I might show him how noble I think him." And hiding her eyes on her father's coat of arms, she wept with mingled joy and agitation. But when she raised them again, and looked from her parent to her lover, the colour came somewhat into her cheek; for with a faint and sad smile the young Lady of St. Leu came forward, and throwing her arm over Albert's shoulder, kissed him on either cheek.

"Give you joy!" she said; "my noble cousin, I give you joy!"

A proud and meaning smile curled the lip of the Captal de

Buch; but his was the only countenance there present which did not bear a strong expression of surprise.

"What is the meaning of this?" exclaimed the Lord of Mauvinet. "Your cousin, lady? Have my dreams proved right? And is the orphan boy I educated ---?"

"Albert Denyn, Count of Granville," replied the young lady, "and my dear cousin. It was to your abode, my lord, that he was taken by my unhappy Uncle Walleran, when the death of his elder brother and the proscription of the whole race drove him mad himself, and left the young heir destitute and in danger. He feared to tell you, it seems, who the child was, lest he should bring your house also into peril; he dared not carry him to my father, who was already suspected, from his connection with the house of Granville."

"But where is your uncle Walleran?" exclaimed the count. "I knew him well in former times: he was always wild and strange, but good at heart."

"Alas! my lord, he is dead," replied the Captal de Buch. "The brief history of the last year is this:—By a strange fate—for I must not venture to call it chance—my band was joined by Count Walleran de Granville as I was riding away from your Castle of Mauvinet. His own nephew, not knowing him as his relation, pledged himself for his good faith. I soon discovered that the wild-looking man was not the being which he seemed; and when he found the station in which Albert was placed with me, he revealed the whole secret, promising me the incontestible proofs of his nephew's birth and rank. These were to be given me at a little inn near St. Leu, where he proposed to leave us. There, however, he suddenly disappeared, enticed away it seems during the night by a fiend-like old man, named Thibalt de la Rue, and some accomplices. That old man had brought down death upon his brother, the Lord of Granville, whose servant he was, by a false accusation; and he now betrayed Count Walleran into the hands of William Caillet, who slew him for some old offence. Thibalt de la Rue, however, possessed himself of the papers which had been drawn up for me. I in the mean time had left Albert and some others behind to seek for Walleran: they found the body, and the Lord of St. Leu coming up, old Thibalt was arrested upon strong suspicion. The Lord of St. Leu turned him over to the Lord of Plessis, as his natural superior; but Monsieur de St. Leu's men searched him before delivering him up, and found the papers for which Albert Denyn had been inquiring in my name. That noble gentleman kept them, waiting for my return from Prussia;"

but intending to act strongly against the Jacques, and fearing that he might be killed in some encounter, the Lord of St. Leu gave those papers to his daughter, with directions to deliver them to me, that I might, when occasion served, assert her cousin's rights. Since his unfortunate death she has placed them in my hands, and I have fulfilled the task. The ways of Providence are strange; and we often see a retributive justice in this world, as if directed immediately by God himself. I find that it was an arrow from the hand of Albert Benyn which smote the old fiend who had betrayed his father and his uncle. His arm it was, also, that after pursuing his uncle's murderer through two long days, delivered him up to justice, bound and overcome. I have but one word more to say, and it is to you, lady," he continued; turning to Adela. "You heard me declare, I believe, when I entered the market-place at Meaux, that I would not have had another man with me to share in the honour of that day for half a kingdom. I believe from my heart, that with somewhat similar feelings, you would not have lost the opportunity of choosing this noble youth, on account of his merit alone, for the brightest coronet that ever sat upon mortal brow; and therefore you will easily forgive me for keeping the secret till your choice was made."

"Oh, my lord!" exclaimed Adela, "how generous you are! Noble in every feeling, chivalrous in every act, your name shall long stand high upon the roll of renown;* and men shall point to the words, 'John de Greilly, Captal de Buch,' and say, 'That was a knight indeed!'"

* It still stands in St. George's Hall at Windsor, amongst the first of those mighty champions who are known by the title of "Founders of the Order of the Garter."

NOTE ON PAGE 371.

THE account given by Froissart of this adventure of the Capital de Buch and his companions is as follows. "The reader will see that I have deviated very little from this account; and, even in the variations I have made, I am justified by other contemporary authors who have written on the subject:—

"En ce temps que ces méchants gens couroient, revinrent de Prusse le Comte de Foix et le Capital de Buch, son cousin; et entendirent sur le chemin, si comme ilz devoient entrer en France, la pestillence et l'horribilité qui couroit sur les gentils-hommes. Si en eurent ces deux seigneurs grand' pitié. Si chevauchèrent par leur journées tant qu'ils vinrent à Châlons en Champagne, qui-rien ne se mouvoit du fait des vilains, ni point n'y entroient. Si leur fut dit en la dite cité que la Duchesse de Normandie et la Duchesse d'Orléans, et bien trois cents dames et damoiselles, et le Duc d'Orléans aussi, étoient à Meaux en Brie, en grand meschef de cœur, pour cette Jacquerie. Ces deux bons chevaliers s'accordèrent que ils iroient voir les dames et les reconforteroient à leur pouvoir, combien que le capital fut Anglois. Mais ils étoient pour ce temps trêves entre le royaume de France et le royaume d'Angleterre; si pouvoit bien le dit capital chevaucher partout; et aussi là il vouloit remonter sa gentillesse, en la compagnie du Comte de Foix. Si pouvoient être de leur route environ quarante lances, et non plus; car ils venoient d'un pèlerinage, ainsi que je vous ai ja dit.

"Lors chevauchèrent que ils vinrent à Meaux en Brie. Si allèrent tantôt devers la Duchesse de Normandie et les autres dames, qui furent moult liées de leur venue; car tous les jours elles étoient menacées des Jacques, et des vilains de Brie, et même-ment de ceux de la ville, ainsi qu'il fut apparent. Car encore pour ce que ces méchants gens entendirent que il avoit là foison de dames et de damoiselles et de jeunes gentils enfans, ils s'assemblèrent ensemble, et de la Comté de Valois aussi, et s'envinrent devers Meaux. D'autre part, et de Paris, qui bien savoit cette assemblée, se partirent un jour de Paris, par flotter et par troupeaux, et s'envinrent avecques les autres. Et fu ce bien peu de mille tous ensemble, en très grand' volonté de mal faire.

Et toujours leur croissoient gens de divers lieux et de plusieurs chemins qui se raccordoient à Meaux. Et s'envinrent jusques aux portes de la ville. Et ces méchants gens de la ville ne voulurent comprendre l'entrée à ceux de Paris, mais ouvrirent leurs portes. Si furent au bourg si grand' plenté que toutes les rues en étoient converties jusques au marché.

"Quand ces nobles dames, qui étoient les bergées au marché de Meaux, qui est assez fort, mais qu'il soit gardé et défendu, car la rivière de Marne l'avoisine, virent si grand' quantité de gens accourir et venir sur elles, si furent moult ébahies et effrayées; mais le Comte de Foix et le Capital de Buch, et leur routes, qui jà étoient tous armés, se rangèrent sur le marché, et vinrent à la porte du marché, et firent ouvrir tout arrière; et puis se mirent au devant de ces vilains, noirs et petits, et très mal armés, et le bannerie du Comte de Foix et celle du Duc d'Orléans, et le pennon du capital, et les gages et les épées en leur mains, et bien appareillés d'eux défendre et de garder le marché. Quand ces méchants gens les virent ainsi ordonnés, combien qu'ils n'étoient mie grand' foison encontre eux, si ne furent mie, si forcés que devant; mais se commencèrent les premiers à reculer, et les gentilshommes à eux poursuivre, et à lancer sur eux de leurs lances et de leurs épées, et eux abattre. Adonc ceux qui étoient devant et qui sentoient les horions, ou qui les redoutoient à avoir, reculoient de honte, tant à une fois qu'ils étoient l'un sur autre. Adonc issirent toutes manières de gens d'armes hors des barrières, et gagnèrent tantôt la place, et se bouterent entre ces méchants gens. Si les abatoient à grands monceaux, et tuoient ainsi que bêtes; et les reboutirent tous hors de la ville que oncques en nul d'eux n'y eut ordonnance ni conroy; et en tuèrent tant qu'ils en étoient tous lassés et tannés; et les faisoient saillir en la rivière de Marne. Finalement, ils en tuèrent ce jour et mirent à fin plus de sept mille: ni jà n'en fut nul échappé, si ils les eussent voulu chasser plus avant. Et quand les gentilshommes retournèrent, ils bouterent le feu en la desordonnée ville de Meaux, et l'ardirent toute, et tous les vilains du bourg qu'ils purent dedans enclorre."

In another place, however, Froissart gives an account of an interview he had with Bassot de Mauleon, mentioned in the text, in which the capital's companion informed him that the ladies of France were totally alone in the market-place, and that the number of Jacques killed was six thousand. Another author greatly reduces the number of the companions of the Count de Foix and the Capital de Buch. By his last authority, also, we find that only one of the gentle men who issued forth from the market-place was killed upon this occasion. The name, however, is by him written "Chambly."

THE JACQUERIE.

The description of the market-place of Meaux, as I have given it in the text, is, I believe, a complete picture of what it was at that time; at least I am led to suppose so from the statements of Monsieur de Secousse, who took infinite pains to ascertain the facts. It may be remarked, also, that many other places mentioned in this work have changed in appearance as much as Meaux; cities having grown up around castles which then stood naked on the hill-side, or at most had a small village of peasants' huts attached to them.

THE END.

